ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN ROMANTICISM

Romanticism and Philosophy

Thinking with Literature

Edited by
Sophie Laniel-Musitelli
and Thomas Constantinesco

Romanticism and Philosophy

This volume brings together a wide range of scholars to offer new perspectives on the relationship between Romanticism and philosophy. The entanglement of Romantic literature with philosophy is increasingly recognized, just as Romanticism is increasingly viewed as European and Transatlantic, yet few studies combine these coordinates and consider the philosophical significance of distinctly literary questions in British and American Romantic writings. The essays in this book are concerned with literary writing as a form of thinking, investigating the many ways in which Romantic literature across the Atlantic engages with European thought, from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophy to contemporary theory. The contributors read Romantic texts both as critical responses to the major debates that have shaped the history of philosophy, and as thought experiments in their own right. This volume thus examines anew the poetic philosophy of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Shelley, and Clare, also extending beyond poetry to consider other literary genres as philosophically significant, such as Jane Austen's novels, De Quincey's autofiction, Edgar Allan Poe's tales, and Emerson's essays. Grounded in complementary theoretical backgrounds and reading practices, the various contributions draw on an impressive array of writers and thinkers and challenge our understanding not only of Romanticism, but also of what we have come to think of as "literature" and "philosophy."

Sophie Laniel-Musitelli is Associate Professor at the Université de Lille, France.

Thomas Constantinesco is Associate Professor at the Université Paris Diderot, France, and a Junior Fellow of the Institut Universitaire de France (IUF).

Routledge Studies in Romanticism

1 **Keats's Boyish Imagination**
Richard Marggraf Turley

2 **Leigh Hunt**
Life, Poetics, Politics
Edited by Nicholas Roe

3 **Leigh Hunt and the London Literary Scene**
A Reception History of his Major Works, 1805–1828
Michael Eberle-Sinatra

4 **Tracing Women's Romanticism**
Gender, History and Transcendence
Kari E. Lokke

5 **Metaphysical Hazlitt**
Bicentenary Essays
Uttara Natarajan, Tom Paulin and Duncan Wu

6 **Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine**
Biography, Celebrity, Politics
David Higgins

7 **Romantic Representations of British India**
Edited by Michael J. Franklin

8 **Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era**
Systems, State Finance, and the Shadows of Futurity
Robert Mitchell

9 **Thomas De Quincey**
New Theoretical and Critical Directions
Edited by Robert Morrison and Daniel S. Roberts

10 **Romanticism and Visuality**
Fragments, History, Spectacle
Sophie Thomas

11 **Romanticism, History, Historicism**
Essays on an Orthodoxy
Edited by Damian Walford Davies

12 **The Meaning of "Life" in Romantic Poetry and Poetics**
Edited by Ross Wilson

13 **German Romanticism and Science**
The Procreative Poetics of Goethe, Novalis, and Ritter
Jocelyn Holland

14 **Colonialism, Race, and the French Romantic Imagination**
Pratima Prasad

15 **Keats and Philosophy**
The Life of Sensations
Shahidha K. Bari

16 **Animality in British Romanticism**
The Aesthetics of Species
Peter Heymans

17 **Legacies of Romanticism**
Literature, Culture, Aesthetics
Edited by Carmen Casaliggi and Paul March-Russell

18 **The Female Romantics**
Nineteenth-century Women Novelists and Byronism
Caroline Franklin

19 **Bodily Pain in Romantic Literature**
Jeremy Davies

20 **Romantic Education in Nineteenth-Century American Literature**
National and Transatlantic Contexts
Edited by Monika M. Elbert and Lesley Ginsberg

21 **Romanticism and Philosophy**
Thinking with Literature
Edited by Sophie Laniel-Musitelli and Thomas Constantinesco

This page intentionally left blank

Romanticism and Philosophy

Thinking with Literature

Edited by Sophie Laniel-Musitelli and Thomas Constantinesco

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2015
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2015 Taylor & Francis

The right of the editors to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Romanticism and philosophy : thinking with literature / edited by Sophie Laniel-Musitelli and Thomas Constantinesco.
pages cm. — (Routledge studies in romanticism ; #21)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Romanticism. 2. Literature—Philosophy. I. Laniel-Musitelli, Sophie, editor. II. Constantinesco, Thomas, editor.
PN603.R568 2015
809'.9145—dc23 2015000730

ISBN: 978-1-138-80550-7 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-75237-2 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by codeMantra

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction: Thinking with Literature 1
SOPHIE LANIEL-MUSITELLI AND THOMAS CONSTANTINESCO

PART I
Romantic Confrontations

1 Absolut Jena: A Second Look at Lacoue-Labarthe's and Nancy's Representation of the Literary Theory of *Frühromantik* 19
CHRISTOPH BODE

2 History and Poetry: Fundamental Aspects and Effects of the Relations between Literature and Philosophy in English Romanticism 40
ERIC DAYRE

3 "Ghostly Language": Spectral Presences and Subjectivity in Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* Poems 60
MARK SANDY

4 Thinking without Being and Acts of Poetry in Shelley 74
ARKADY PLOTNITSKY

PART II
The Poetics of Thought

5 Prolegomenon to the Remnants: Shelley's "Triumph of Life" 97
SIMON JARVIS

6 Wordsworth's Thinking Places 117
PASCALE GUIBERT

7 Philosophy, Politics, Sensation: The Case of John Clare 131
YVES ABRIOUX

PART III
Romantic Selves

8 Philosophies of Identity and Impersonation from Locke to Charles Mathews 147
ANGELA ESTERHAMMER

9 The Happiness of Romantic Philosophy 166
JOEL FAFLAK

10 Subjectivity and Despair in Blake and Kierkegaard 179
LAURA QUINNEY

11 Thomas De Quincey and Søren Kierkegaard: The Elective Affinities between Romantic Philosophical Autobiography and Autobiographical Philosophy 194
FRANÇOISE DUPEYRON-LAFAY

PART IV
Transatlantic Romanticism

12 The Tension between Immanence and Dualism in Coleridge and Emerson 209
DANIELLE FOLLETT

13 Emerson's Philosophy of Creativity 222
SUSAN L. DUNSTON

14 The Perversity of Skepticism: Qualia and Criteria in Emerson and Poe 233
PAUL GRIMSTAD

Coda: Cavell and Wordsworth: Illuminating Romanticism 245
EDWARD T. DUFFY

List of Contributors 255
Index 259

Acknowledgments

This book originates in an international conference on "Romanticism and Philosophy" held in Lille in September 2012 and organized jointly by the French Society for the Study of British Romanticism (SERA) and the Universities of Paris Diderot and Lille. Our warm thanks go to the SERA, who set this project in motion and to the scientific committee of the Romanticism and Philosophy conference: Mathieu Duplay, Thomas Dutoit, Jean-Marie Fournier, and Marc Porée for their guidance. We are grateful to our institutions, the University of Lille and the University of Paris Diderot, and in particular to our research centers Cécille and LARCA, who supported this project from the start. We are particularly thankful to Camille Masse and to Jean-François Delcroix (University of Lille) for their invaluable help throughout the project and to Elizabeth Levine, Andrew Weckenmann, and Joshua Wells at Routledge for welcoming this project and granting us their trust and support.

We are also grateful to Cheryl Lester and Philip Barnard for kindly granting us permission to quote from their translation of *L'absolu littéraire*, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (1988). We would also like to thank Jens Martin Gurr and Berit Michel for permission to reprint parts of Angela Esterhammer's chapter, a shorter version of which first appeared as "Impersonation in Late-Romantic Urban Performance and Print Culture" in *Romantic Cityscapes* (2013); the Pennsylvania State University Press for permission to reprint selections of Susan Dunston's "In the 'Light out of the East': Emerson on Self, Subjectivity, and Creativity" (*Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26.1 [2012]: 25–45); and Bloomsbury Publishing for permission to reprint portions of Edward T. Duffy's *Secular Mysteries: Stanley Cavell and English Romanticism* (2013).

Finally, we would like to express our sincerest thanks and gratitude to our contributors for committing their considerable talent, energy and enthusiasm to this project.

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

Thinking with Literature

Sophie Laniel-Musitelli and Thomas Constantinesco

> yet a speechless child,
> Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain
> Her lidless eyes for thee;
>
> Percy B. Shelley, "Ode to Liberty" (58–60)

> Tell all the truth but tell it slant—
> Success in Circuit lies
>
> Emily Dickinson (F1263, 1–2)

OVERTURE

Shelley's lines celebrate the alliance of literature and philosophy, as liberty emerges from creative freedom and critical awareness. Yet, the form of the poem tells us more, through figures, sonorities, and connotations. A chiasmus promises speech to poetry and confers vision to philosophy, creating new intersections between poetic and speculative faculties. Through the return of the same plosives, fricatives, sibilants, and vocalic sounds from "speechless child" to "lidless eyes," the endeavor of philosophy resonates as a mere echo of the poetic "murmur." The forgotten connotations of the word "strain" surface, gliding from "effort" to "melody," whereby song surreptitiously invades the province of speculation. "Tell all the truth but tell it slant— / Success in Circuit lies," Emily Dickinson writes, intimating that truth is the province of literature as much as it is the preserve of philosophy, but also indicating the slanting of thought as the hallmark of literature, in an implicit contrast with "the long chains of simple and easy reasonings" celebrated by Descartes as the geometrical model of philosophical thinking. Here also, meaning resides and develops in poetic form. The alliterative and incantatory rhythm of the first line turns the telling of truth into a sacred errand for poetry, while the second line, conflating "Success" and "Circuit" in quasi-paronomasia, modifies and almost reverses the initial claim by playing on the dual meaning of the word "lies," strategically placed in final position, whose signifier inscribes falsehood at the very heart of poetic truth-telling, virtually anticipating Gilles Deleuze's notion that "art is the highest power of falsehood" (102). Simultaneously joining and separating literature

and philosophy in their intersection, both poets provide appropriate, and appropriately paradoxical, figures for the issues that this collection wishes to address. For it is in that "strain," in the gap, and the tension created by literary writing that the dynamics of thinking takes on its distinctive "slant."

The contributions in this volume are bound by a common concern for literary writing as a form of thinking in British and American Romanticism. Each in their own ways, they explore the kinship and the conflicts, the elective affinities and the dangerous liaisons, which bind literature to philosophy in England and the United States from the end of the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. During the Romantic era, literature was defined as a major object for speculative thinking, but it also turned into an alter ego of philosophy, even a rival. It strove to sublate the inner contradictions of philosophical systems but also to offer thought experiments of its own, in an effort to fashion the "philosophical poem" Wordsworth calls for in *The Prelude*, "yearning toward some philosophic song / Of truth that cherishes our daily life" (I: 230–31). As the contributions gathered here suggest, not only does Romantic literature generate a form of thinking that articulates major philosophical problems, it also, and more radically, thinks outside philosophical discourse, subverting our conceptions of speculative thinking. The essays that follow do not simply offer philosophical readings that would extract kernels of philosophical truth from Romantic texts: the major contention of this collection is that Romantic literature thinks, in its own terms, forms, and figures.

This book originates in an international conference on "Romanticism and Philosophy" held in Lille in September 2012 and organized jointly by the French Society for the Study of British Romanticism (SERA) and the Universities of Paris Diderot and Lille. The volume includes a selection of revised papers from the conference, as well as specially commissioned essays. The rich debate and the variety of approaches featured at the conference gave birth to two books, one published by the Presses Universitaires de Nancy focusing on the forces of the figural at work within the discourse of philosophy in German and English Romanticism, and this collection, which explores the poetics of thought in English and American Romanticism. The common ambition of the contributors to this volume is to show that Romantic literature actively shapes specifically literary forms of truth, knowledge and speculation. It is predominantly concerned with what Simon Jarvis calls "verse-thinking," or what Eric Dayre terms "verse philosophy," the workings of thought within poetic form, as poetry allows for thought to emerge and take shape within the constraints of rhyme and meter.[1] Yet, this collection also explores the philosophical significance of fiction, essay writing, and performing arts in the Romantic age. Romantic writers reflect on the forms of thought, knowledge and truth, in the strict sense of the word "form," in prose, verse, and performance, through syntax, rhythm, sonorities, and generic conventions, from the pastoral to the epic and the lyric, blurring the traditional divide between poetry and prose and reminding us usefully that literary practices in Romanticism were not limited to poetry.

In the words of one of the contributors, the poetics of thinking in Romantic literature is the dazzling and riotous irruption of "unpreconceived, unannounced, unthought thought," unraveling the architectonics of discourse and disrupting the course of poetry, "'hollowing' in its ground-breaking novelty, 'hollowing' by force and by necessity, in its re-foundation of the place of poetry and philosophy" (Guibert). Such disruptive "hollowing" cannot be fully translated into rational discourse. It can only be apprehended tentatively, through close readings, training our ears to the workings of thought within literary texts. Such close readings range from Blake to Emerson, and from the "big six" to a meditation on John Clare's "minor" poetics (Abrioux). The corpus reflects the main orientations of the volume, with an emphasis on Wordsworth and Shelley as philosophical poets, deeply engaged in the poetics of thinking, but it also betrays the limitations of the project. It would be a vain endeavor to try to encompass all the most relevant texts on the relationship between romanticism and philosophy. We have two major regrets, the relatively limited place given to the works of John Keats and a predominantly masculine corpus, although the presence of Jane Austen (in Faflak), as well as a reflection on feminist thought (in Dunston) can be underlined. Likewise, the relative emphasis on Emerson in the final section partly obscures the diversity and complexity of the responses offered by American writers to their British and European forebears, as well as the richness of the relation between literature and philosophy in nineteenth-century America, although Paul Grimstad's account of Emerson and Poe in the wake of Stanley Cavell aims at revealing the extent of that complexity. In that perspective, the focus on Emerson serves as an invitation to pursue the task of confronting European and American Romantic texts, while fully acknowledging the central place that "the Sage of Concord" occupies as a catalyst in a dialogue that is both transatlantic and transdisciplinary.

The contributors offer sometimes conflicting but largely convergent approaches to the relations between literature, philosophy, and theory from the Romantic age to our time, multiplying the critical perspectives the better to look into a common object, or rather into what Bruno Latour calls a network of "tangled" objects. For Latour, unlike smooth objects, tangled objects "have no clear boundaries, no well-defined essences, no sharp separation between their own hard kernel and their environment. It is because of this feature that they take on the aspect of tangled beings, forming rhizomes and networks" (24). For recent critics, the fields of philosophy, literature and theory have become increasingly tangled within the "open system" of intellectual disciplines since the end of the eighteenth century (Rajan 20), thus creating disquieting but creative "entanglements," in what Yves Abrioux terms "an ecology of adjacency." In the Romantic era, writers strongly asserted the reflexive dimension of their practice, opening up the field of literary theory, blurring the line that separates literature from philosophy, thereby widening the possibilities for crossovers and raising the issue of hybridization. This constant interplay "exposes disciplines to

their 'unthought' through the recourse they often have to other disciplines from which they borrow in order to understand their objects" (Rajan 36). In this volume, for instance, Angela Esterhammer explores the "performative metaphor[s]" at work within Enlightenment philosophies of identity and Laura Quinney looks into the "language of self-division" in Kierkegaard, revealing the contact zones between literature, philosophy, and theory in the Romantic era as sites of reflexivity and creativity.

According to Latour "tangled" objects challenge the linearity of time, as later events retroactively alter the object's definition: "[tangled objects] can no longer be detached from the unexpected consequences that they may trigger in the very long run, very far away, in an incommensurable world" (24). The contributors are not simply reappraising the critical heritage of Romantic writing. They are also, and above all, studying the ways in which Romantic texts are entangled with their afterlives in contemporary philosophy and theory, from Paul de Man to Stanley Cavell. De Man formulates his theoretical discourse through Shelley while Wordsworth's and Cavell's writings are intertwined, to the extent that, for many readers, they have become one text. This raises the issue of the "empower[ment]" (Swift 1) of Romantic literature. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy's seminal book, *The Literary Absolute*, defines Romanticism less in terms of periodization than as the moment when philosophy invested literature, defining it as an object of speculation. In this volume, Christoph Bode calls into question the seamless passage from Romantic poet to philosopher and theorist. For him, freeing German early Romantic texts from the intellectual grasp of their representation in *The Literary Absolute* is a plea for the sovereignty of literature. For other contributors, in the wake of Paul Hamilton's *Realpoetik*, the engagement in philosophical and theoretical thought is part of the specificity of Romantic textuality: "Such Romanticism crosses generic and disciplinary boundaries as a matter of course. It defines itself through a process of self-dissemination which leaves each moment of its instantiation characteristically fragmentary" (Hamilton 7). Such fragmentary instantiation is not an invitation to treat Romantic texts "teleologically as pre-texts for recent critical theory" (Rajan and Clark 1), but rather to explore the ways in which Romantic literature constantly bends the course of its history, inventing its origins and anticipating its afterlives. "[O]bliterat[ing] its original form in the moment of its projected future" (Sandy), Romantic literature allows its readers to break free from linear and passive forms of literary influence and to explore creative modes of inheritance. This endeavor is close to Nikolas Kompridis's concept of "philosophical romanticism," a form of contemporary "re-inheritance" that "requires a growing backwards towards the past" (2), as Romanticism lives on in contemporary thought as a return to innovation.

Grounded in varied but complementary theoretical approaches and reading practices, this collection draws on a wide array of writers and thinkers, from Blake to Emerson, but also from de Man to Rancière,

and the contributors bring into play various philosophical traditions, from German Idealism to Deconstruction and postmodern thought. Amid this variety, the essays are bound by a discussion of the Romantic moment as the advent of self-reflexivity within literature and the irruption of textuality within the discourse of metaphysics, inaugurating the era of theory. The Romantic moment, identified by Andrew Bowie as the "turn towards language … as the primary object of philosophical investigation" (22), and, closer to our concerns, by Tilottama Rajan and David L. Clark as the moment when "concepts like the subjective universal and absolute knowledge are exposed to the force of processes that are homologous to what is now called *écriture*" (4), can be provisionally defined as the emergence of a converse relation between literature and philosophy. This compelled philosophy to reflect on its own forms and figures of thought, while literature became self-reflexive and recognized its speculative import. Romanticism inaugurates the reflective relationship between literature and philosophy, confronting thinkers as different as de Man and Rancière to the same questions: "the notion of literary absolute redraws the dividing lines between the singular and the universal, fragments and totality. As such, it is the question philosophers, from Derrida to Badiou and Rancière ... , ask literature, and in this game of mirrors, the question literary critics ask philosophy, from Blanchot to de Man" (Lecler 19, our translation). A mutual relationship emerges as literature vies with philosophy, while it opens up new speculative fields for later thinkers to elaborate some of their distinctive concepts, raising the issue of the disciplinarity of theory at the margins of literature and philosophy.

Since "Romanticism was naturally comparative" (Hamilton, *Realpoetik* 7) we need "fluency in different philosophical, literary, and cultural histories" (8) to apprehend it. This volume offers a comparative study in many respects. It is interested in the links between Anglophone literature and European philosophy and theory. It also brings together British Romanticism and its American belated counterpart, in the wake of several major studies that explore "American Romanticism as a sustained effort to restate Romanticism in American terms" (Gravil xvi; cf. also Chai, Goodman, and Greenham). Furthermore, this volume is comparative in yet another, more institutional and disciplinary sense. It originated in the third annual conference of the French Society for the Study of Romanticism (SERA) and, as such, it is the product of a dialogue, bringing together specialists from the fields of literary studies, philosophy, and theory around the contention that Romanticism is best seen from various disciplinary perspectives. In the effective words of Ernst Behler, Romantic literature "yield[s] new meanings from ever new modes of historical consciousness" (4). At the heart of this project is the ability of Romanticism to compel us, as contemporary scholars, to reflect on our own critical practices and theoretical backgrounds. This collection confronts scholars from Britain, North America, Germany, and France who approach the relationship between Romantic literature and

philosophy from various philosophical traditions and theoretical perspectives. Romanticism fashioned the institutional landscape of European and American universities, and as scholars, our reading practices are engaged in the dynamic interplay of disciplines inaugurated by Romanticism.

The problematic historicity of Romantic literature has been at the heart of the critical debate on its political import for the last decades, especially since Jerome McGann pointed to the political dangers of abstracting Romanticism from its time and place of production. According to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, Romanticism is a reflection on literary history that transcends periodization: "Neither a simple 'literary movement' nor—still less—the appearance of some 'new sensibility,' nor even the reading (in any sense) of the classical problems of the theory of art or aesthetics" (29). Recent critics have become wary of the "isolation [of literature as the absolute] in its perfect closure upon itself" (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 11): in "'the poetry of poetry' … criticism aestheticizes itself out of its obligations to any further discursive sphere in which it might belong" (Hamilton, *Metaromanticism* 17). Does the conception of Romantic literature as an essentially self-reflexive moment imply the loss of Romanticism as a historical process and as a political force? According to Eric Lecler, *The Literary Absolute* "saves" literature from the contingencies of history "at the cost of its [political] significance" (14, our translation).

Several essays in this collection, by contrast, do look actively for the "politics of literature" in Romanticism, defined by Jacques Rancière as the way literary texts develop their own political discourse without being mere illustrations of their authors' commitments or mere products of their time, overthrowing former hierarchies and effectively shaping the common good. While Pascale Guibert examines the "egalitarian levelling" at work in Wordsworth's poetic writing, Mark Sandy reveals the historical and political realities coming back as spectral presences in the timeless landscapes of the Wordsworthian wild. The politics of Romantic literature often takes the form of a continued endeavor to "attain voice" in the absence of metaphysical certainties. For instance, Arkady Plotnitsky locates the "efficacity" of Shelleyan poetry in the experience of freedom through critical awareness, both a "tragic affirmation and [an act] of poetry" allowing man to "actively shap[e] the field of possible events." This "sense of simultaneous direction toward and deferral of the achievement of freedom" (Eldridge 21) is at the heart of Romantic historicity, bending the course of time. "Romantic 'poetic contemporaneity' merges tradition and actuality, present action and future promise" (Dayre) in what Jacques Rancière would call a "longue durée" conception of history. This concept, referred to by several contributors (Abrioux, Esterhammer), offers a multilinear vision of time defined as the articulation of the general and the singular, of particular events, and eternity. For Rancière there are "modes of connection we can call *anachronies* without any disparaging intent: events, notions, significations going against the course of time, setting meaning into motion, freeing it from all

forms of contemporaneity, from the self-coincidence of time" ("Le concept d'anachronisme" 67, our translation). The politics of literature implies a redistribution of the timeless and the circumstantial because, in the words of Simon Jarvis, "the technical aspects of the work of art are not its least but its most intimately historical."

The poetics of time is decisive to grasp the relation between Romantic literature and thought. One of the aims of this collection is to explore Romantic writing as "a doing *in* time and a doing *of* time" (Dayre), as a process in time and as the manipulation of time, to see Romanticism as "authentically temporal" (de Man 206), but also as creatively temporal, generating loops and detours in the course of time, as in the lines by Shelley that open this collection: "yet a speechless child, / Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain / Her lidless eyes for thee" (58–60). In "Ode to Liberty," Shelley celebrates art and literature as "aught that is which wraps what is to be," (56) as words become the "thinnest integument for our thoughts" (Woolf 123), in a vindication of the power of literature to create what it longs for. In "Ode to Liberty," political revolution appears as a "semantic loop" (Jenny 9, our translation): Athenian democracy is a promise as well as a remembrance, it is the longed-for advent of a distant memory. Poetry leaves the realm of the actual to open on to the potential, while Philosophy laboriously tries to discern a timeless concept rather than a process in time. The future is contained within the past, and, conversely, the past will blossom in the future, as poetry redistributes origins and outcomes, diverging from the conception of art as mimesis: art comes first, anticipating and intimating the emergence of political freedom. In this collection, Romantic literature often has the last word over philosophy and theory for it is seen as having the power to "efficaciously reanimate thought" (Jarvis).

OVERVIEW

The chapters in this volume address the questions sketched out above in different ways, even as they intersect with one another. Rather than organize them chronologically, at the risk of fashioning a necessarily artificial history of the relations between literature and philosophy in Romanticism, we have chosen to group them into four thematic parts: (I) Romantic Confrontations, (II) The Poetics of Thought, (III) Romantic Selves, and (IV) Transatlantic Romanticism, followed by a coda that revisits many of our central concerns.

Part I focuses on the ways in which Romanticism can be viewed as a stage where literature and philosophy compete with one another in a "*power* relationship" (Bode) that takes the form of a series of silent appropriations and professed overcomings. For not only did Romantic writers and thinkers engage in contradicting earlier philosophical claims, but the Romantic corpus also became, in retrospect, the archive that modern critical theory could delve into in order to look for, as well as invent, its own legacy.

In "Absolut Jena: A Second Look at Lacoue-Labarthe's and Nancy's Representation of the Literary Theory of *Frühromantik*," Christoph Bode offers to reassess Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's and Jean-Luc Nancy's *L'absolu littéraire* (1978), and its English-language translation, *The Literary Absolute* (1988), which set the critical scene for many of the ensuing debates on the tangle of relations between literature and philosophy. Bode shows how *L'absolu littéraire* locates the origin of Romanticism precisely in a crisis of representation whose dramatization allows for a sublation of literature by and within philosophy, when literature becomes self-conscious and unfolds as a text producing its own theory. However, such an appropriating drift overlooks the opposite movement that actually drives Romantic literature: according to Friedrich Schlegel's famous claim, "Poesy has to take over where Philosophy ends" (KFSA 2: 261, trans. Ch. Bode). As Bode suggests, if Romantic literature can be said to relate to the absolute, then, it is by absolving itself from philosophy and from the duty of representing the absolute other than negatively, in the paradoxical form of allegory.

Displacing the scene of reading to England, but also engaging in issues of translation and appropriation, Eric Dayre's "History and Poetry: Fundamental Aspects and Affects of the Relations between Literature and Philosophy in English Romanticism" highlights the relations of English Romanticism with Aristotelian philosophy, Enlightenment literature and Deconstructionist reading practices. Considering the shift from Godwin's emphasis on prose and romance to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's adoption of poetry as a new modality for thinking time, experience and history in and with literature, Dayre traces this transition back to diverging appropriations of Aristotle's *Poetics* and follows its consequences through Paul de Man's critique of the distinction between symbol and allegory in Romanticism, offering a meditation on the notion of "verse philosophy" in which poetic rhythm provides both a figure for and an access to the experience of time.

Mark Sandy's "'Ghostly Language': Spectral Presences and Subjectivity in Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* Poems" also draws our attention to the Romantic poetics of time. In the spectral geography of mourning he constructs and explores, Sandy shows how the ghostly presences inhabiting and haunting Wordsworthian landscapes are also figures of a poetic past (Milton, Spenser, and Wordsworth himself) whose return, in the form of a series of disseminating allusions, constitutes the weft of the Romantic text, pointing in advance, and almost uncannily, to the spectralization of Romanticism itself in Romantic and post-Romantic writing and theory, as "Romanticism is one such new order that constitutes its own 'ghostly memory of mourned absences' and the haunted presence of its own future absence."

Finally, in "Thinking without Being and Acts of Poetry in Shelley," Arkady Plotnitsky delineates yet another series of philosophical conjunctions, thus reframing once more the place of Romanticism within the history of philosophical thinking, by reading Shelley's poetry, and in particular "Mont Blanc," in connection with Alain Badiou's engagement with Platonism on

the vexed issue of ontology in its relation to the nature of truth. If Badiou's ontological argument is grounded in his view that "[w]hen you decide upon what exists you bind yourself to Being" (Badiou 57, qtd. in Plotnitsky), a poem like Shelley's "Mont Blanc" even questions the possibility of this type of decision because its conditions of possibility appear to lie beyond the reach of thought. "The deep truth is imageless," Shelley famously said in his *Prometheus Unbound* (II, iv, 116), and with him, Being "becomes irrevocably unhinged from thought" (Plotnitsky). Shelley's poetic ontology thus appears as more "radical" than any form of philosophical ontology, from Plato, to Hume, and Badiou. Although dark, such vision cannot be construed as nihilistic. It is rather "an affirmation of life under the condition of tragedy," which eventually leads Plotnitsky to consider the ethical and political consequences of Shelley's poetic thinking, for it is only under such tragic conditions that ethics and politics can become poetry, in accordance with Shelley's argument in *A Defence of Poetry*.

Part II explores the dynamics of thinking as it unfolds in the movement of its own writing, transforms itself, and sometimes even unsettles itself. Poetic writing thus becomes much more than just a "form" for thought to express itself, or a costume that abstract ideas would put on and off as they pleased while remaining intact: writing becomes the site where the event of thinking happens, which requires as close, or microscopic, a reading as possible, in order to take the measure of the disruption such an event creates.

In "Prolegomenon to the Remnants: Shelley's 'Triumph of Life,'" Simon Jarvis expounds on the notion of "verse-thinking," which encapsulates "two competing and complementary ideas about what it might be to offer a philosophical interpretation of a poem" *as a poem*: not only does Jarvis's approach of Shelley's "Triumph of Life" reveal how "verse leaves no idea unchanged," as many of his own readings of Wordsworth and Coleridge have already amply demonstrated (cf. *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* and "Thinking in Verse"), but his minute attention to the workings of Shelley's poetics also suggests that "technique is the way art thinks," for meaning actually develops in the sequencing of the poem, in the succession of the tropes and figures forming its texture, in the distribution of graphemes and phonemes, and it is in the play of language that we discover how meaning grows. Tracing the different valences of life in the poem, Jarvis's close reading leads him to challenge the many interpretations of Shelley's "Triumph of Life" as an essentially skeptical or pessimistic poem in the wake of Paul de Man's "Shelley Disfigured," to contend that it may well have been intended as a "prophylactic" against the miscontruction of "life" as mere "living on."

In "Wordsworth's Thinking Places," Pascale Guibert offers to reflect on the Wordsworthian landscape in light of Alain Badiou's consideration of the respective roles of poetry and philosophy. The impossibility to write the philosophical poem he "yearn[d] for" led Wordsworth to "formulate the place of his poetry, in the break ... between its experimental poetics and all space already filled-in with arrested predeterminations," in the breach

between earlier philosophies that serve as poetic departure points and truths which begin to take shape as the poems unfold. Wordsworth's poetic landscapes thus appear as paradoxical commonplaces, turning away from the philosophical *topoi* they nevertheless conjure up while becoming the locus out of which new truths can emerge and be shared.

Writing in the shadow of Wordsworth and grappling with the ghost of his poetic forebear, as Harold Bloom described him, John Clare, the "peasant poet," concludes the section. In "Philosophy, Politics, Sensation: The Case of John Clare," Yves Abrioux shows how Clare responded poetically to the emergence of a new "regime of sensation" arising from the changing nature of the English landscape, and in particular to the perceptual aggressions resulting from the destruction of the centuries-old topography of the English countryside, due to the agricultural revolution and the growing number of enclosures that accompanied it, thus also joining Guibert in her concern for "the politics of literature" and the ways in which, according to Jacques Rancière, literary writing generates a new "distribution of the sensible." Reconsidering the reception of Clare and his minor yet highly representative place in the history of English Romanticism, Abrioux then proceeds to analyze three poems by Clare in terms of the "minor" poetics of "stuttering," "freed from even the most implicit lip service to established philosophical or political hierarchies," thus allowing us to listen to "the peculiar music of Clare's poetics," that of "a style 'yet to come.'"

Also at stake in Guibert's and Abrioux's explorations of the feeling and perceiving subject, although obliquely, is the underlying question of the many reconfigurations of the self in Romanticism, which is the main focus of Part III. This section stages "Romantic Selves" from the interpersonal construction of identity in Esterhammer and Faflak to the metaphysical quandaries of subjectivity in Quinney and Dupeyron-Lafay, always focusing on writing as a force welding the subject, from the hidden tropes at work within the philosophies of subjectivity to acts of self-creation through writing, impersonation and identity-play, incorporating a wide range of literary genres, from the essay to the autobiography and from drama to *Schattenspiel* ("shadow play").

In "Philosophies of Identity and Impersonation from Locke to Charles Mathews," Angela Esterhammer widens the scope of inquiry, not only because she looks at the many transformations of the notions of selfhood from the Enlightenment to the late-Romantic era, but also because she tracks these metamorphoses in a wide array of texts and contexts, from philosophical treatises to works of literature and popular forms of entertainment. Taking the 1820s as her vantage point, Esterhammer demonstrates how this "notoriously *un*philosophical" moment occasioned a reprise of Enlightenment concerns for the stability and continuity of personal identity in Hazlitt, Keats, and Hogg, but also in the performances of a renowned actor and "impersonator," Charles Mathews, while showing how much Enlightenment philosophical discourse, from Locke and Hume to Adam Smith, was already

haunted by theatrical metaphors, as philosophy and literature borrowed continuously from one another. Esterhammer thus suggests that Romantic selfhood is best thought of at the crossroads of two intellectual traditions, one that views identity as substantial, interiorized, and authentic, and the other that considers the self as composite, relational, and performative.

In "The Happiness of Romantic Philosophy," Joel Faflak also engages in the new articulation of self and other that emerges with Romanticism and further considers the relation between literature and philosophy in Romanticism as it developed in prose. Tracing how an earlier Enlightenment inducement to seek happiness secured itself in the Romantic era via a vicarious pleasure in the suffering of others, Faflak offers what we would call a purposefully "untimely" reading of Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818) in conjunction with Arthur Schopenhauer's critique of happiness in *The World as Will and Representation* (1819). His analysis demonstrates how Austen's last novel ascertains "the happiness of progress/progress of happiness as a way of managing various forms of 'uneasiness'": in *Persuasion*, the enlightened examination of feeling becomes the imperative to be or get happy, thus "articulat[ing] for the turbulent politics of Regency Britain a global politics of happiness that resembles ... , taking up Derrida's notion that 'there is no such thing as a harmless remedy,' … a Romantic *pharmakon* of happiness."

While Faflak shows how Austen and Schopenauer illuminate each other and help see through the Romantic ideology of individual and collective happiness, the following two chapters pay particular attention to Kierkegaard, viewing him, in the words of Lorraine Clark, as "the last romantic" (18). In "Subjectivity and Despair in Blake and Kierkegaard," Laura Quinney shows how Blake and Kierkegaard "both treat despair as endemic to the experience of subjectivity." Rejecting, each in his own way, philosophical tradition as privileging "objectivity" over subjective life, and thereby "lead[ing] the subject to despair of itself," Blake and Kierkegaard argue for an analogous movement of introspection which paradoxically leads to a turning away from the self, identified as the source of its own despair. In other words, despair is not so much an unfortunate and contingent accident as "a *constitutive* feature" of selfhood and "an essential moment in the vocation of subjectivity," which arises from "[t]he pressure to consolidate a 'self'" and the recognition of "its simultaneous impossibility." Quinney's parallel reading of Blake and Kierkegaard enables her to demonstrate how the poet and the thinker both envision that a path out of despair lies in "a radical inwardness," a "subjectivity without self," a radicalness also experienced at the level of their idiosyncratic and innovative writing styles whose confrontation suggests something of an odd chiasmus between Kierkegaard's poetic philosophy and Blake's philosophical poetry.

In the last chapter of Part III, Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay offers another untimely pairing that takes the form of a chiasmus, as she explores Kierkegaard's philosophy of subjectivity and his belated romanticism in relation with Thomas De Quincey. Addressing the generic hybridity and "elected

affinities" between De Quincey's "philosophical autobiography" and Kierkegaard's "autobiographical philosophy," Dupeyron-Lafay highlights the anxiety of inner fragmentation in both authors, and their subsequent recourse to similar distancing techniques whereby "[i]mpersonality and impersonation … paradoxically ma[ke] them appear at their most enigmatic and ambiguous, but also at their barest and truest." If the Blake-Kierkegaard connection sheds light on the act of writing as the emergence of a form of subjectivity beyond the self, the De Quincey-Kierkegaard connection reveals yet another aspect of the complex relationship between self and subjectivity, as self is paradoxically reached through anonymity and impersonation.

The final part endeavors to frame Romanticism not only as a European phenomenon, but also as a triangular relationship between Britain, Continental Europe, and the United States. Such a scale shift helps modify our apprehension of the geography of Romanticism, but also of its historicity, since Romanticism in America largely developed in the mid-nineteenth century with the advent of the generation of writers who, for F. O. Matthiessen, best embodied the "American Renaissance": Emerson and Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman – even if, as early as the 1810s and 1820s, writers such as Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper were already beginning to translate Romantic concerns and motifs in an American context.

In "The Tension between Immanence and Dualism in Coleridge and Emerson," Danielle Follett explores the vicissitudes of the strain between "a Neoplatonic immanentism bordering on monism, and a subject-centered, romantic, idealist dualism" that underscored the writings of both Coleridge and Emerson, highlighting the "line of relation" that unites them, to quote from Emerson's essay on "Plato" (661), but also calling attention to their divergence. Follett accompanies "the dynamic of ideas" as they unfold in the course of their respective œuvres and discusses "some of the ways in which Emerson, who, as generally agreed, was indeed a Coleridgean, was also not a Coleridgean." This leads her to emphasize the enduring "crack" in Emerson between nature and spirit, "not easy to be soldered or welded" (*Letters* 2: 32). She concludes that Emerson's essays and lectures register a constant wavering between a vision of nature as a projection of the spirit, its mirror image, if not its creation, and the recognition that nature exists independently of the mind that contemplates it. In the end, Follett suggests that such rift implicitly entails a politics of the subject, as she delineates the ways in which "Emerson's inconsistency, between the perspective that matter is 'really real' and the idealist view that sees it as illusion …[,] lead[s] to two different plans of action: harmony with nature or mastery over it."

In "Emerson's Philosophy of Creativity," Susan L. Dunston examines another dimension of Emerson's Romanticism by focusing on his conception of "genius" and engaging in its underlying dialectics of self and other, of "quotation and originality" as Emerson would have said. Doing so, she demonstrates how Emerson grappled simultaneously with European Romantic and Eastern philosophies, reminding us that "the new yet unapproachable

America [Emerson] [found] in the West" was also figured as "'the sunbright Mecca of the desert,' … not as the pioneer's prairie, the miner's western mountains, or the territory that would lure Huckleberry Finn." Looking forward, and displacing Emerson in yet another series of contexts, Dunston eventually suggests how the improvisational philosophy he developed can be read fruitfully in the context of feminist criticism or environmentalist thinking, thus prolonging a recent trend in Emerson studies, which consists in placing him in heterogeneous and sometimes purposefully anachronistic contexts (cf. Cheyfitz, Posnock), and testifying simultaneously to what Richard Eldridge has called the "persistence" of Romantic concerns in contemporary thought.

In "The Perversity of Skepticism: Qualia and Criteria in Emerson and Poe," Paul Grimstad's parallel reading of Emerson and Poe starts "in a Cavellian key," as he detects in both writers, and in the wake of Stanley Cavell's long-standing engagement with them, an "American romanticist response to the threat of skepticism"— the threat that the self may be irremediably divorced from the world, that one's personal experience may never be recognized by others, and that the "private" and the "social" may never coincide. Grimstad then considers Emerson's essays "Self-Reliance" and "Experience" and Poe's tale "The Imp of the Perverse" in connection with Wittgenstein's philosophy to suggest, with Cavell but also against and beyond him, that they each show "how the grammar of the word 'experience' includes *both* aspects of what we might call 'qualia'—what things are like; first-person immediacy—and the public criteria by which our words become shareable." Doing so, Grimstad inscribes Emerson and Poe within a philosophical tradition going back to Descartes and Kant, even as he highlights their "perversion" of that tradition, and demonstrates how their philosophy resides in the style of their writing, or the "sound" of their prose.

Rather than vainly trying to conclude a series of debates that we hope this collection will have contributed to renew and expand, we thought it best to end with a coda that addresses one more time several issues explored in this collection, while opening up further avenues of discussion. Edward T. Duffy's "Cavell and Wordsworth: Illuminating Romanticism" testifies to the comparative and transatlantic reach of our argument, as he examines Cavell's readings of Wordsworth in the light of Cavell's own interest in Emerson and Thoreau to show how they "illuminate" one another, thereby confirming the "tangled" nature of Romanticism and the complexity of its joining of literature and philosophy. In the Romantic literature of thinking, language changes sides. Language does not so much reach out to the world as "the world calls for words" (Cavell 116, qtd. in Duffy) reaching toward "the life of things" (Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" 50). In a new distribution of the living and the non-living, words literally come to life, make for life, beyond Derridean poststructuralism, which "suffer[s] a certain disembodying tendency, replacing the putative materiality of lived experience with a highly attenuated world of traces of traces" (Rajan and Clark 19). Life can no longer be the

object of philosophy alone but also, perhaps above all, of art. As Emerson reminds us in "Experience," "Life is not dialectics" (478), suggesting that life cannot be fettered by the constricting chains of philosophical systems but can be embraced by the supple and shifting lines of literary texts, in order to unfold, experience, test and understand itself.

NOTE

1. No page number (or entry in the Works Cited) is indicated for references to the chapters in this volume.

WORKS CITED

Badiou, Alain. *Briefings on Existence*. Trans. Norman Madarasz. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006. Print.

Behler, Ernst. *German Romantic Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. Print.

Bowie, Andrew. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1994. Print.

Chai, Leon. *The Romantic Foundations of the American Renaissance*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987. Print.

Cheyfitz, Eric. "A Common Emerson: Ralph Waldo in Ethnohistorical Context." *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 30.1–2 (Spring–Fall 2003): 250–82. Print.

Clark, Lorraine. *Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. Print.

Constantinesco, Thomas, and Sophie Laniel-Musitelli, eds. *Romanticism and the Philosophical Tradition.* Nancy: PU de Nancy, 2015. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. London and New York: Continuum, 1983. Print.

De Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1983. Print.

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*. Trans. Laurence J. Lafleur. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960. Print.

Dickinson, Emily. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Ed. Ralph Waldo Franklin. 3 vols. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1998. Print.

Eldridge, Richard. *The Persistence of Romanticism, Essays in Philosophy and Literature*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays and Lectures*. Ed. Joel Porte. New York: The Library of America, 1983. Print.

Goodman, Russell. *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. Print.

Gravil, Richard. *Romantic Dialogues: Anglo American Continuities, 1776–1862*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000. Print.

Greenham, David. *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2012. Print.

Hamilton, Paul. *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. Print.

———. *Realpoetik: European Romanticism and Literary Politics*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. Print.

Jarvis, Simon. *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.

———. "Thinking in Verse." *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*. Ed. James Chandler and Maureen McLane. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. 98–116. Print.

Jenny, Laurent. *Je suis la révolution: Histoire d'une métaphore, 1830–1975*. Paris: Belin, 2008. Print.

Kompridis, Nikolas, ed. *Philosophical Romanticism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, and Jean Luc Nancy. *L'absolu littéraire: théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*. Paris: Seuil, 1978. Print.

———. *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester. Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1988. Print.

Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Into Democracy*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004. Print.

Lecler, Eric. *L'absolu et la littérature, du romantisme allemand à Kafka: pour une critique politique*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013. Print.

Matthiessen, F. O. *American Renaissance. Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. London: Oxford UP, 1941. Print.

Posnock, Ross. "Planetary Circles: Philip Roth, Emerson, Kundera." *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*. Eds. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007. 141–67. Print.

Rajan, Tilottama. "Smooth and Tangled Systems: Philosophy as Metadiscipline In German Idealism." *Romanticism and the Philosophical Tradition.* Eds. Thomas Constantinesco and Sophie Laniel-Musitelli. Nancy: PU de Nancy, 2015. 19–44. Also published in Stefanie Fricke, Felicitas Meifert-Menhard and Katharina Pink, eds. *Romanticism and Knowledge: Selected Papers from the Joint Munich Conference of the German Society for English Romanticism and the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism*, Trier: WVT, 2015. Print.

———. and David L. Clark, eds. *Intersections: Nineteenth-Century Philosophy and Contemporary Theory*. Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1995. Print.

Rancière, Jacques. "Le concept d'anachronisme et la vérité de l'historien." *L'Inactuel* 6 (1996): 53–68. Print.

———. *Politique de la littérature*. Paris: Galilée, 2007. *The Politics of Literature*. Trans. Julie Rose. Cambridge: Polity, 2011. Print.

Schlegel, Friedrich. *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. Ed. Ernst Behler. 35 vols. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958. [KFSA]. Print.

Shelley, Percy B. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*. Eds. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistatt. New York and London: Norton, 2001. Print.

Swift, Simon. *Romanticism, Literature and Philosophy: Expressive Rationality in Rousseau, Kant, Wollstonecraft and Contemporary Theory*. London: Continuum, 2006. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando: A Biography*. Ed. Brenda Lyons. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993. Print.

Wordsworth, William. *The Major Works*. 1984. Ed. Stephen Gill. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

This page intentionally left blank

Part I
Romantic Confrontations

This page intentionally left blank

1 Absolut Jena

A Second Look at Lacoue-Labarthe's and Nancy's Representation of the Literary Theory of *Frühromantik*

Christoph Bode

SETTING THE SCENE

When Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's and Jean-Luc Nancy's *L'absolu littéraire* was published in 1978, it served an obvious purpose: to make accessible, for the first time, to a larger French reading public, twelve key texts of German *Frühromantik*, or early Romanticism—for, oddly enough, the twelve key texts selected by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (henceforth, without any disparaging intent, L_2N) had never before been translated into French. As L_2N make clear in their Preface, to fill that startling lacuna, to undo that conspicuous absence by "presenting" what one had hitherto only read or heard about (the French original actually says, on its title page, "*présentée* par Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy"; emphasis added) is their primary purpose:

> Although the names of the Schlegel brothers, and that of their journal—the *Athenaeum*—are not unknown, and although one encounters a certain number of citations from their texts (most often from their "fragments," in which case the detached citation reinforces the equivocity of this neglect), it is nonetheless true that the absence, in France, of translations of the most important texts of "early romanticism" is one of the most startling of the lacunae that almost traditionally make up the singular bequest of the nation's cultural and editorial institutions. (*LA* 2)[1]

As jacket copies will do, the original French jacket copy only amplifies this declaration:

> All this was played out around 1800, in Jena, around a journal (the *Athenaeum*) and a group (that of the Schlegels). But although nearly two hundred years have passed since this moment took place, virtually none of the major texts in which such an operation was effected have been translated into French. *The book's primary ambition is consequently to allow certain of these texts to be read.* (*LA* xxii, emphasis added)

Though this seems as clear as can be, it pays not to lose sight of this context of origin, because it renders obsolete, I think, such criticism as, after the

publication of the English language edition in 1988, that L_2N should have taken *English* Romanticism into account (Jean-Pierre Mileur in Rajan and Clark 338).[2] One should think that, as Henry James once stated categorically, one must grant the artist his *donnée*[3]—and L_2N's *donnée* is German *Frühromantik*, after all.

But since not all reviewers of the American edition were able to correctly summarize the table of contents of the original anthology (cf. Pfau 309) and one even spoke of "Lena's *Athenaeum*" (Sheffy 892—really, one would love to hear more about that Lena), it might be helpful, just as a reminder, to specify once more what the original corpus actually was: *L'absolu littéraire*—but not *The Literary Absolute*, from which all primary texts were discarded—contains seven texts by Friedrich Schlegel, namely the *Critical Fragments* of the *Lyceum*, the *Athenaeum Fragments* (mostly attributable to him, though his elder brother August Wilhelm, their wives Caroline and Dorothea, and Novalis and Schleiermacher also contributed some, see *AL* 178), further *Ideas*, *On Philosophy* (a.k.a. "Letter to Dorothea"), *Dialogue on Poetry*, "On the Essence of Criticism" and his sonnet "Athenaeum." These seven texts are complemented by one of August Wilhelm Schlegel (*Lecture on Art and Literature*, 1801), by three of F. W. J. Schelling (namely, the introduction to his 1802–1803 lectures *Philosophy of Art*, his satirical poem "Heinz Widerporst's Epicurean Confession of Faith" and the amazing *Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism*—a manuscript in Hegel's hand, but most probably authored by Schelling, under the influence of Hölderlin), and, finally, by "one" text of Novalis, the first two *Dialogues* (of five) written for, but never published by the *Athenaeum*.

This selection is most puzzling. Not because it contains no English Romantics. Not because of the centrality it accords to Friedrich Schlegel—he has long been recognized as *the* central theoretician of *Frühromantik*.[4] Not because the inclusion of any of these texts would seem dubious or debatable—it isn't. Rather, the selection is most puzzling for its exclusions. For L_2N do not only follow their predecessor Madame de Staël (who famously asked, "Pourquoi les Français ne rendent-ils pas justice à la literature allemande?" [*LA* 130, fn. 2]) in their ambition to "fill in" (*LA* 3) a French lacuna, they also follow her with regard to her idiosyncratic selectiveness: in her attempt to sell German Romanticism to France and to Europe at large, de Staël notoriously included Goethe, Schiller, and Bürger as "Romantic poets of the North" in her *De l'Allemagne* (1819), but paradoxically bypassed large sections of German Romanticism in silence—for example, she made no mention of Friedrich Schlegel's scandalous novel *Lucinde*, of Heinrich Wackenroder's *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, or of Novalis' only novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (cf. Bode, "Europe" 128–30). Considering that the subtitle of *L'absolu littéraire*, *Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*, suggests a book that deals with the literary

theory of German Romanticism in its entirety, the number and gravity of omissions is ominous and staggering—e.g. Achim von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, the Brothers Grimm, E. T. A. Hoffmann. But even if one shrugs this claim off as sheer publicity hype and acknowledges that *L'absolu littéraire*, in its text and compilation, is unambiguously and unmistakably about *Frühromantik* only, the absences of Wackenroder and Tieck, of Klingemann, Jean Paul, and Hölderlin are conspicuous. What L_2N present is an extremely narrow focus on a very brief period of time, on one specific place, one journal, one group of "ten persons at most" (*LA* 8),[5] or, to quote from the blurb once more: "around 1800, in Jena, around a journal (the *Athenaeum*) and a group (that of the Schlegels)" (*LA* xxii).

While this selectiveness (though not the exaggerated claim) is, of course, perfectly legitimate, it does, however, raise the question of how representative (of *Frühromantik*) this material really is—a question that would have loomed less prominently, if the publication had been based upon a much broader and more heterogeneous corpus in the first place. But such concerns can easily be countered by an argument of expediency, namely that the obvious purpose of *L'absolu littéraire* was to acquaint the French with hitherto *untranslated* documents of German early Romanticism, not with the entirety of its manifestations, let alone its contributories or contiguous contemporaries, like Fichte, Schiller, and Hegel.

But whereas this question of representativeness is by no means laid to rest by such an argument of expediency (which, by the way, loses all its power in an English or German language context), this essay here—granting the authors their *donnée*—is concerned with a different, though related problem. It has to do with a second purpose pursued with the publication of *L'absolu littéraire* as well as with the publication of *The Literary Absolute*, a purpose that is no less obvious than the first, so that one hesitates to call it secondary or even hidden—for it is anything but.

That second purpose is what I would call the *appropriation* of certain theorems of German *Frühromantik* for twentieth-century French and American critical theory. Correctly appropriated, the literary theory of *Frühromantik* obviously satisfies a need, a yearning—and it is this need or yearning, this desire, so my hypothesis, that in turn motivates and informs the specific mode of appropriation. To avoid any misunderstanding: I do not believe that such a thing as a totally disinterested appropriation is even a possibility. Quite the contrary, I believe that all appropriations are necessarily driven by interests and needs. What I am interested in is the *exact nature* of this particular appropriation and what it tells us about the late twentieth-century "Western" critical scene, about its contents and discontents. I am interested in the *drift* of appropriation (which is based upon, but not identical with a previous selectiveness), in the concrete ratio of theoretical grasp and reach, on the one hand, and literary practice on the other—in short, I am interested in the discernible *relationship* (which can be seen as a *power* relationship) of philosophy and (Romantic) literature.

L_2N are quite open about their strategy (if the jacket copy has their authorization): having said that the book's primary ambition is to allow these texts to be read, they point out not only the possibility, but the absolute *necessity* that such readings, to prevent evil, would have to be guided readings—the guidance, of course, being provided by them. Like the texts, readers will be *accompanied*—it is for their own good, it is a safety measure, for we are dealing with an imminent danger:

> But because the constraints that romanticism exerts upon us are proportionate to the misconceptions that surround it, we have deemed it necessary to provide each of these texts with an accompaniment, and to gauge for ourselves their theoretical import. This is quite simply a matter of *vigilance*: for in the end, is it not this "literary absolute" that continues, even today, to haunt our theoretical semisomnolence and our reveries of writing? (*LA* xxii)[6]

It is, of course, true that what L_2N contribute to *L'absolu littéraire* is much, much more (not only in quantitative terms) than merely a commentary—after all, it could be published separately, without all the weighty primary texts, as a book in its own right, as *The Literary Absolute*. What they contribute is meant to be, as Ian Balfour says, an *Ergänzung* or "completion" (727), though by no means, Balfour maintains, "a mere recasting of the Romantic corpus as some poststructuralist gospel *avant la lettre*" (728), although both "mere" and the use of "completion" make you wonder: *is it* a recasting of the Romantic corpus as some poststructuralist gospel *avant la lettre and something more*? Has the literary theory of *Frühromantik* been *waiting* for this? Was there a need on the part of the Jena group that L_2N could satisfy almost two hundred years later in an act of almost eschatological dimensions?

How well does this *betreutes Lesen*, this "guided reading" succeed anyway? Everyone seems to be agreed on what *AL/LA* is about. Here is Ian Balfour in his review of 1989:

> Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy see the German Romantic project as epoch-making (of what is still in many respects "our" epoch) for the way literature becomes the object of an infinitizing theory, which in turn recognizes itself as literary. Literature as well as the theoretical claim for literature—all of a sudden—become "absolute." … It is the absolute of irony, of the parecbasis, the function of the relentless play of language and thought scrutinizing, among, other things, their own staging. (728)

Compare this with Thomas Pfau's summary of 1990:

> As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy state with provocative though compelling generality, "romanticism does not lead us to anything that one

> might imitate or that one might be 'inspired by' … [but] it 'leads' us first of all to ourselves" (2). Thus "we still belong to the era that [romanticism] opened up," and it is the presence of "a veritable romantic *unconscious* … in most of the central motifs of our 'modernity'" (15) that, according to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, causes contemporary thinkers to be "repeating Jena today—because they have not been able to read it" (13). (310)

Or with Tilottama Rajan's and David Clark's succinct summary in 1995:

> It is here … that Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy locate the inception of theory in the syncretizing of literature and philosophy within texts that contain their own self-doubling commentary. … Regardless of which form it takes, Jena romanticism responds to the Kantian challenge to reconcile the Idea with its sensible presentation by replacing the philosophical or theological absolute with a literary absolute: a philosophy-in-practice whose conjoining of speculation and textuality has strong affinities with what we now call "theory." By writing itself as an allegory of its reading, Jena romanticism paradoxically achieves the absolute as the (im)possibility of reconciling Idea with presentation. It thus grasps the Idea not as something transcendent, but as the very process of its self-reflexive production. (27–28)

Or with Marc Redfield's of 1998:

> Building on the work of Walter Benjamin and Maurice Blanchot,[7] Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy analyze the philosophical structure of the idea of the literary text as a "self-conscious" text, an idea now commonplace but which emerged fully for the first time in the work of Romantic writers, as an aspect of the Romantic development or elaboration of modern aesthetics. Conceptualized with more precision, the self-conscious text unfolds into the model of a text that generates its own theory: "theory itself as literature," as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy put it, "or, in other words, literature producing itself as it produces its own theory" (12). The literary text becomes what it is—literary—in reflecting on its own constitution and thereby inscribing within itself the infinite task of criticism, hollowing out a space for readers who, in engaging the text, repeat the production of the text as it generates its own self-understanding. (43)

There is much overlap here and little disagreement. Of course, all these summaries are based not only on extensive readings of *The Literary Absolute*, but are evidently, and understandably so, relying on the same key passages of L_2N's œuvre—to quickly run the *parcours* again: *Frühromantik* can also be called "theoretical romanticism" (*LA* 2), because *Frühromantik* is the

"*theoretical* institutionalization of the *literary genre* (or, if you like, of literature *itself*, of *literature* as absolute[.]" (*LA* 3)

> [R]omantic thought involves not only the absolute of literature, but literature as the absolute. Romanticism is the inauguration of the *literary absolute*. … What this amounts to saying … is that romanticism is neither mere "literature" (they invent the concept [CB: yes, so what?]) nor simply "theory of literature" (ancient and modern). Rather, it is *theory itself as literature* or, in other words, literature producing itself as it produces its own theory. The literary absolute is also, and perhaps above all, this absolute *literary operation*. (*LA* 12)

In *Critical Fragment* 115 L_2N see "the entire program of the Athenaeum" [sic]: "The whole history of modern poetry is a running commentary on the following [CB: "following" is an interpretive interpolation] brief philosophical text: all art should become science [orig.: *Wissenschaft*], and all science art; poetry and philosophy should be made one" (*AL* 13). Or, to quote the condensed reader's digest of the blurb:

> [R]omanticism is first of all *a theory*. And the *invention* of literature. More precisely, it constitutes the inaugural moment of literature as *production of its own theory*—and of theory that thinks itself as literature. With this gesture, it opens the critical age to which we still belong.
>
> A Poietics in which the subject confounds itself with its own production, and a Literature enclosed in and enclosing the law of its own engendering, romanticism (ourselves, in sum) is the moment of the *literary absolute*. (*LA* xxii)

But if all that is so uncontroversial, why does Thomas Pfau deem it necessary to save *The Literary Absolute* from misconstrual (cf. 309)? Why does Daniel Hoolsema see "[p]roof of its [*LA*'s] resistance to interpretation … in the mutually exclusive messages it has generated" (845)? Could it be that, all truisms apart (it has been a commonplace of *Romantikforschung* that the Romantics produced their own theory, often in the guise of fiction and poetry, and that their "literature," through its pronounced self-reflexiveness, invariably contained its own theory, so that, yes, the modern concepts of "literature" and "theory" emerge simultaneously *and* are inextricably *fused* right from the beginning)—could it be, I say, that there is a problem with L_2N's "guided reading," that their appropriation of *Frühromantik* has to be *framed* by a second "guided reading," so that it does not turn into a misappropriation of something that is, of course, still seen as a proper, legitimate (though interested) appropriation? But what about that first appropriation? What is the signature that L_2N leave on their *Aufbereitung* of *Frühromantik*? How do they *represent* it?

REPRESENTATIONS

According to L_2N, Romanticism "proceeds" (*LA* 32) from a crisis left behind by Kant's critical philosophy, the crisis being, so they argue, that the idea of the subject cannot be represented (*dargestellt werden*) adequately,[8] so that it remains an "empty form" (*LA* 30): "this is so because the form of time, which is the 'form of the internal sense,' permits no *substantial* presentation. As is well known, the Kantian 'cogito' is empty" (*LA* 30). Since Romanticism emanates from a crisis that is fundamentally philosophical, it *must* be approached philosophically: "If romanticism is approachable, … it is approachable *only* by means of the 'philosophical path'" (*LA* 29, emphasis added). This point of origin of *Frühromantik* seems to have an almost uncanny determining power, if one can believe L_2N: "Philosophy, then, controls romanticism" (*LA* 29)—which means, since "literature" and "criticism" emerge at the same time, and not accidentally so, that philosophy controls both literature *and* criticism, what is more: literature and criticism/theory are "rigorously determined" by philosophy: "Already part of the romantic concept of literature, criticism and its modern avatar, 'theory,' are rigorously determined by philosophy, and most of all when they pretend to escape it" (*LA* xix).[9]

But curiously enough, Romanticism, in turn, "overcomes" Kant (cf. *LA* 33) and resolves the *Darstellungsproblem*, or the problem of representation, by transposing it to the level of the aesthetic. Quoting from the *Earliest System-Programme*—"the philosophy of the Spirit is an aesthetic philosophy" and "the philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet" (*LA* 34, 35)—, L_2N explain: "Philosophy must fulfill itself in a work of art; art is the speculative *organon par excellence*. … Philosophy must effectuate itself—complete, fulfill, and realize itself—as poetry" (LA 35, 36).

This is the core of L_2N's "rigorous attempt to articulate the philosophical-theoretical grounding of the romantic (and thereby modern) conception of literature" (*LA* viii): whereas in Kant ideas of pure reason are incompatible with sensible presentation—it is impossible to adequately (re-)present them—, the romantic theory of literature has found a "more [?] adequate form of presentation" (*LA* ix). As Barnard and Lester expound,

> [i]n literature, i.e., in the productive unity of creative formation and critical reflection, the formative power or *bildende Kraft* of the artist extends beyond a presentation of the sensible (beyond the level of representation), and, recalling Kant's concept of the sublime, accomplishes a presentation of what in Kant remained unpresentable. (*LA* ix)

It is "[o]nly after and in reaction to Kant's critical system" (*LA* x) that the literary theory of early Romanticism comes about, which is why, or so it is said, it is primarily philosophical:

> Rather, *The Literary Absolute* concerns the specific manner in which the Jena romantics, and especially Friedrich Schlegel, pose the question of literature as the question of the presentation of philosophy, or in other words, in this case, as the question of the aesthetic presentation of the idea along lines determined by philosophy. (*LA* x)

While it does, of course, make sense to approach Romanticism philosophically, this presentation of *Frühromantik* seems highly problematical. First because of its misrepresentation of Kant, then because of a curious subreption to which I will turn later. First then, Kant (see also Bode "Coleridge and Philosophy" 594–600). In Kant, reason (*Vernunft*) is not productive of any new knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), its function is rather to control the workings of the understanding (*Verstand*). And, different from the categories (*reine Verstandesbegriffe*) or the *Anschauungsformen*, the concepts of reason (*Vernunftbegriffe*) are not necessary to make any experience, but they can be used to organize experience into a meaningful whole. As regulative ideas, these concepts of pure reason, or *Ideen*, have no objective reality, but they are powerful and they have an effect—they cannot be proven, but it may make sense and may be useful to assume them. Just like regulative ideas like 'God' or 'the world in its totality' or 'freedom of the will' or 'immortality' are beyond experience, so they do not permit of sensible (re-)presentation: they are just not that kind of animal, or 'object,' that can be represented. To quote from §59 of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgement*): "Verlangt man gar, daß die objective Realität der Vernunftbegriffe, d.i. der Ideen, und zwar zum Behuf des theoretischen Erkenntnisses derselben dargetan werde, so begehrt man etwas Unmögliches, weil ihnen schlechterdings keine Anschauung angemessen gegeben werden kann" (211).[10] But they are immensely useful—after all, they are products of reason (though no *knowledge* produced by it), and reason in Kant is, of course, the higher, regulative power, which can, for example, identify cases in which the categories, as concepts of the lower faculty of the understanding, are misapplied to objects which are beyond experience: a misuse that will invariably produce the famous antinomies (as a warning signal that you have moved beyond the sphere in which the use of such software makes sense).

In this context, three points should be noted. The first is the absence, in the above quote from Kant, of any alarm—Kant is not surprised, let alone alarmed or scandalized by the fact that, to use L_2N's terminology, Ideas cannot be presented adequately. The scandalization is all on L_2N's side. The reason why L_2N are scandalized, and Kant is not, may well be that they haven't fully grasped the liberating power of the concept of "regulative ideas" in their useful function as unprovable, yet helpful assumptions. Take, for example, this sentence from the "Overture" of *The Literary Absolute*: "It is well known that the Idea in Kant will be relegated as an unproductive and unattainable regulatory [sic] principle to a secondary role with regard to Knowledge [*savoir*]" (*LA* 30–31).[11] The phrasing is so revealing: Kant

did not "relegate" *Vernunftbegriffe* to some second league—he left them where he found them: in the premier league; of course, they are not productive of any *Erkenntnis*—that is why they are justly called "regulative"; what is meant by "unattainable" is not quite clear—they are *there*, they have an *effect*. But, of course, you cannot see them and you cannot touch them. Is that a bad thing? Finally, of course, the role of *Ideen* is *not* secondary at all—quite the contrary, they are in the control tower, only that L_2N's phrase "with regard to Knowledge," in that final position, obscures the fact.

The second point that can be noted is that L_2N reduce the problem (if problem it is) of the non-representability of *Vernunftbegriffe* to that of the un-representability of the *subject*[12]—that, after all, is the starting point of the whole of *The Literary Absolute*, since they claim it was also the starting point of Romanticism. But their problem with regard to regulative ideas in general percolates down to the subject, when they write, for example: "[T]he Idea, insofar as it is the idea of the subject or, that is, its unrepresentable form, remains for Kant a *regulatory* [sic] *idea*." (*LA* 32). This seems hopelessly muddled. Any *Vernunftbegriff* or *Idee*—not just "insofar as it is the idea of the subject"—is a regulative idea; and "or, that is [?], its unrepresentable form" sounds nonsensical: ideas of pure reason ("as such") do not lend themselves to direct representation; it is not that they have a form which, however, for unspecified reasons, could not be presented.

Barnard and Lester, following their masters, share their problem: "Kant bequeaths the crisis of presentation to his successors by effectively depriving the subject of its being-subject, i.e., of its adequate presentation of itself to itself, reducing the subject to little more than the logically necessary, purely regulatory [sic] idea of the unity of its representations" (*LA* xv). Again: the crisis is not Kant's. The subject is not deprived of anything if we say: it is a powerful idea, but it cannot be adequately represented—it is, like so many other great ideas—*Begriff ohne Anschauung*, concept without the possibility of direct representation. "Reducing" it—well, if you have an unacknowledged pre-Kantian notion of "the subject," then you might well feel personally reduced when told it is just a regulative idea that helps you to move along. "Purely regulatory [sic] idea of the unity of its representations": if the subject is a *Vernunftbegriff*, then it has no representation whatsoever, neither in the singular, nor in the plural, and you certainly don't need it as a regulative idea to create a unity of representations that aren't there in the first place.[13]

It is almost as if L_2N balked at the idea, or found it impossible to entertain the possibility that, yes, as early as in Kant, the subject is postulated as a "good idea"—void of objective reality; unable to be proven; a regulative idea that organizes experience for us in a useful way: the subject as a useful assumption that, of course, like all other *Vernunftbegriffe*, cannot be represented.

This extremely fluid concept of a subject in Kant seems to have escaped L_2N—alarmed, they speak of a crisis that had to be resolved. Maybe their conspicuous, ambivalent wavering with regard to the question of the subject

in *The Literary Absolute*—do they want to hold on to a post-Kantian notion of it or do they want to get rid of it?[14]—would have been unnecessary, had they only embraced this revolutionary possibility of the subject as idea of reason. But they need this "crisis of presentation" (*LA* xv) to trigger their whole drama. There has to be a central problem of *Darstellung*, so that the action may take its course.

The problem with that representation of theirs—and that is the third point worth noting in this context—is that Kant does not use the word *Darstellung* in connection with (to use the lingo of *The Literary Absolute*) the representation of Ideas (*Vernunftbegriffe*). He prefers *Anschauung* (a term notoriously difficult to translate; the standard 'intuition'—cf. note 10 of this chapter—is most unfortunate, suggesting as it does something like 'intuitive knowledge,' when *Anschauung*, quite on the contrary, rather connotes [interior or exterior] visualization, the act, process, or product of a visual/mental *Vorstellen*). In the relevant passages of the *Critique of Judgement,* Kant uses *Darstellung* only as a translation of *Hypotypos*. However, in *their* explication or accompaniment of the *Earliest System-Programme*, their starting point, L_2N use *Darstellung*, in its German original, quite a lot. This is understandable, for their plot line is that the whole of Romanticism derives from the crisis of (re-)presentation, a *Darstellungsproblematik*. Understandably, I say. But the word doesn't occur in the *Ältestes Systemprogramm*. Is that embarrassing? L_2N do not seem to think so: "[T]his sublation, at any rate as it inscribes itself here, in filigree, takes place in, by, and as *Darstellung* itself. Although the word never appears and the formulation is highly elliptical, this is nevertheless affirmed with great clarity: "*the philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet*" (*LA* 35).[15]

Oh, *that* is what it means?

"Yet the problem of *Darstellung* is at no moment treated explicitly" (*LA* 36). So true. How could it, when not even the word occurs?

What remains of this bold operation? The assertion that Romanticism originates in a philosophical problem. That it can only be understood philosophically. That "literature … is thoroughly determined as a response to a certain philosophical 'crisis'" (*LA* xiv). That "[t]he received notion of literature … is in fact philosophical through and through" (*LA* xiv). That "[t]he moments at which literature makes its most comprehensive gestures of authenticity invariably correspond to its greatest dependency on philosophy" (*LA* xiv). That "Philosophy must fulfill itself in a work of art" (*LA* 35), but that, although Philosophy has to transform itself into art, poetry paradoxically still depends on the perfection of the "science of the Absolute" (*LA* 113), although—this bears repetition—Philosophy had just proven inadequate to the job.

In short: literature is presented by L_2N as controlled, determined, and dependent upon Philosophy. Is that really what Friedrich Schlegel proposed? That literature should from now on be subservient to a discipline that had just been exposed as being incapable of solving the pertinent problem of representation?

And what about the absolute? "The *absolute* … of literature" (*LA* 11)? "[L]iterature as the absolute" (*LA* 12)? "[T]he *literary absolute*" (*LA* 12)? How can it, in all its different manifestations, be so controlled, determined, and dependent? Surely, that is not how the absolute used to behave in the old days, when it was still, well, absolute—and not just sort of absolute.

A TRIVIAL NECESSITY: ALLEGORICAL SPEECH AND THE RENUNCIATION OF *ABBILDUNG*

For Friedrich Schlegel it is incontrovertible that the absolute cannot be known. Since all knowledge is *conditional*, the *unknowability of the absolute* (as the totally unconditioned) is an "identical triviality": "*Erkennen* bedeudet schon ein *bedingtes* Wissen. Die Nichterkennbarkeit des Absoluten [ist] also eine identische Trivialität" (*KFSA* 18: 511). This insight is trivial and tautological because it follows directly from the very definition of "absolute" as *Unbedingtes*, *das Höchste*, *das Unendliche*, etc. The highest, the infinite can never be adequately represented in any finite medium, and Philosophy is not in any way more adequately equipped for this task than any other discipline or field of human activity, for this very basic, systematic reason: Philosophy, too, is just another conditional, finite attempt to achieve the impossible, namely, to attain and to speak about the absolute: "Die Philosophie, ganz rein gedacht, hat keine eigne Form und Sprache [i.e., itself is just as finite as any other system of signification]; das reine Denken und erkennen des *Höchsten, Unendlichen* kann nie adäquat dargstellt werden" (*KFSA* 12: 214). Schlegel also speaks of the impossibility of positively reaching the highest by way of reflection: "Die Unmöglichkeit das *Höchste* durch Reflexion positiv zu erreichen" (*KFSA* 19: 25).

If, however, the highest is inexpressible, then it can only be spoken about in another, indirect way, i.e. *allegorically*: "Das Höchste kann man eben weil es unaussprechlich ist, nur allegorisch sagen" (*KFSA* 2: 324). This "speaking allegorically" can take place in the realm of the arts and of literature, in all *Poesie* (a term that in Friedrich Schlegel covers every activity and its products, cf. Benjamin 247). It is the inadequacy of philosophical discourse that necessitates allegory—to complete a quotation begun above: "durch Reflexion positiv zu erreichen führt zur Allegorie d.h. zur *(Mythologie und) bildenden Kunst*" (*KFSA* 19: 25).

However, to speak allegorically presupposes an awareness of the fact that what one is talking about is not *the thing*, that what can be articulated only *points* to that which can*not* be articulated. Allegorical speech is, by definition, self-conscious speech. It is a speech that knows it is not really about what it says, but about something else. It is a speech that is aware of its necessary inadequacy, it knows that what it wants to represent cannot be represented (the infinite in the finite), but only be indicated, indirectly. The most obvious form in which such awareness can be flagged out is the

fragment, *Frühromantik*'s most characteristic form or genre (cf. *LA* 40), indicating as it does that we are forever only given a piece, a fraction, an incomplete representation of something that is not "there," not attainable—something that this fragment can only *point to*. The fragment is a monument to non-representability.

Such a speech would be a poesy that reflects its own conditions, its possibilities and limitations. And analogous to a Philosophy that reflects its own conditions and which one would call *Transzendental-Philosophie*, so a poesy that reflects the conditions of its own working can be called—and, indeed, was called by Friedrich Schlegel—*Transzendentalpoesie* (cf. *KFSA* 2: 204). But any such poesy and art as is self-reflexive, reflecting the conditions of its own being and possibility, constitutes a break with the theory and practice of mimesis and representation (cf. Wanning 71). Transcendental poesy, in Friedrich Schlegel's understanding, is *auto-referential*—a point about which his friend Novalis was no less clear, when he remarked that with language it was as with mathematical formulae: they constituted a world of their own, played only with themselves, expressed nothing but their own wonderful nature.[16]

If the signs of language are only arbitrary and conventional, then the auto-referential use of language and the self-reflexive foregrounding of that practice will be tantamount to a poesy of poesy (Schlegel: "Poesie der Poesie," *KFSA* 2: 204), Novalis' *Sprache in der Zweiten Potenz*, "language to the power of two" (cf. Seyhan 41). To the degree that it is self-reflexive, such literature will contain its own theory and its own criticism:

> Es gibt eine Poesie deren eins und alles das Verhältnis des Idealen und des Realen ist, und die also nach der Analogie der philosophischen Kunstsprache Transzendentalpoesie heißen müsste. … So wie man aber wenig Wert auf eine Transzendentalphilosophie legen würde, die nicht kritisch wäre, nicht auch das Produzierende mit dem Produkt darstellte, und im System der transzendentalen Gedanken zugleich eine Charakteristik des transzendentalen Denkens enthielte: so sollte wohl auch jene Poesie die in modernen Dichtern nicht seltnen transzendentalen Materialien und Vorübungen zu einer poetischen Theorie des Dichtungsvermögens mit der künstlerischen Reflexion und schönen Selbstbespiegelung … vereinigen, und in jeder ihrer Darstellungen sich selbst mit darstellen, und überall zugleich Poesie der Poesie sein. (*KFSA* 2: 204)

So it is true: *this kind* of literature and *this kind* of criticism are co-emergent, because the criticism is not extraneous to the text, it is intrinsic to it. And if this self-reflexive criticism succeeds, then such a book or piece of writing does not need, strictly speaking, a review, as Friedrich Schlegel said of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*: it is a work that judges/criticizes itself (cf. Benjamin 290).

If criticism is necessary at all, then it would have to be a kind of completion of the work (cf. Benjamin 293), but *on the terms of poesy*, of course: "Poesie kann nur durch Poesie kritisiert werden. Ein Kunsturteil, welches nicht selbst ein Kunstwerk ist, … hat gar kein Bürgerrecht im Reiche der Kunst" (*KFSA* 2: 162).[17] And such criticism would necessarily have to focus on the *form* of the work of art, because it is in the form that its specific reflexivity finds expression (cf. Benjamin 296). From which it follows that only such works can be criticized at all as contribute something to the evolution of art/literature (cf. Benjamin 301)—a clear indication of Schlegel's formalist historicism.

In all of this, traditional Philosophy and *Wissenschaft* play no major roles. If poesy and Philosophy are to be united (cf. *KFSA* 2: 115), then it is on the terms of the former—if Philosophy turns into poesy, *then* it is acceptable and most welcome:

> *Amalia:* … Ist denn alles Poesie?
> *Lothario:* Jede Kunst und jede Wissenschaft *die durch die Rede wirkt, wenn sie als Kunst um ihrer selbst willen geübt wird, und wenn sie den höchsten Gipfel erreicht*, erscheint als Poesie. (*KFSA* 2: 304, emphasis added)

Every art and science that works through discourse appears as poesy, if it is practiced for its own sake and if it attains the highest summit. "Poesy has to take over where Philosophy ends" (cf. *KFSA* 2: 261, my translation). "The necessity of poesy rests upon a need that is created by the failure of Philosophy to represent the infinite," says Schlegel in 1807 in a private lecture (qtd. in Frank 306, my translation). Therefore, not only "in one sense" does Friedrich Schlegel "[envisage] … the completion of philosophy in the work of art" (*LA* xv).

And yet, poesy itself, we have learnt, also fails to represent the absolute—it only *points* to it, allegorically. Let us ponder that again with an eye on the literary absolute of *The Literary Absolute*. Art and literature achieve the impossible, namely, to speak about that which cannot be spoken about by allegorically speaking about it. By pointing to the fact that it cannot be represented, these art forms acknowledge their own *necessary* incapability of ever achieving what they are striving for (cf. Frank 158). The materialized awareness of this discrepancy between endeavor and (necessary) failure is called Romantic Irony. Romantic Irony is an *objective* feature of self-reflexive literature that, while acknowledging its limits, continually strives against them (one of the key documents on irony is the Critical, or *Lyceum*, fragment no. 108; cf. *KFSA* 2: 160; cf. also Benjamin 305–07; Wellek 14–16; Beiser *Idealism* 447ff.). Allegory and that kind of irony (of which L_2N make very short shrift indeed; cf. *LA* 78, Newmark), both forms of *uneigentliche Rede*, are necessary complements, originating from the same conditions, but with a marked difference, as Marshall Brown remarks with unsurpassed

economy: "Allegory is irony with a purpose; irony is allegory freed of the melancholy inherent in the inability to express its meaning directly" (99). Both allegory and irony are clear markers of an acknowledged, necessary failure to ever be able to represent the absolute. Literature does not and cannot represent the absolute. Nor does it partake of the absolute. Nor, of course, is literature the absolute itself, or itself absolute, "the *Literary Absolute*" (*LA* 91). How could it be?

Instead, this kind of literature displays a feature that has nothing to do with the absolute—nor, for that matter, with the subject: because of its auto-referentiality and its self-reflexiveness it displays a feature that is observable in all self-referential systems of sufficient magnitude and complexity—it becomes inexhaustible by finite interpretations so that, provoking ever new ones, it triggers off a series of progressive readings that, however, invariably fail to arrest 'the' meaning of the text. It was Novalis who postulated that a poem should be totally inexhaustible, "like a human being" (cf. Frank 48), and who maintained the truth claim of poetry: It is "das ächt absolut [!] Reelle: je poetischer, je wahrer" (qtd. in Frank 43). But note how "absolut" has here been deprived of all its transcendent moorings: it is not otherworldly, it is *here*. That other Absolute should be ostracized from this world, says Novalis: "Alles Absolute muß aus der Welt hinaus ostraciren. In der Welt muß man mit der Welt leben" (qtd. in Frank 261). And Friedrich Schlegel deduces from this that all truth is relative, all knowledge is symbolical ("Alle Wahrheit ist relativ, Alles Wissen ist symbolisch" [*KFSA* 18: 417]). The endless productivity of "*Romantische Poesie*" as "*progressive Universalpoesie*" (*KFSA* 2: 182, the famous *Athenäums-Fragment* no. 116), both in the individual work and in the evolving genre at large, owes itself to its auto-referentiality (see Bode *Ästhetik*)—hovering as it does between its literal and its literary (or allegorical) meaning—and no less to its self-reflexivity, as is explained at length in the same fragment. Its essence is that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. Such semiosis is never-ending because no final meaning is arrestible.

Thus by acknowledging its limitations, literature becomes limitless, inexhaustible. Turning its back on mimesis, it imitates reality in its maybe most defining aspect: that it is inexhaustible by finite interpretations (cf. Frank 233). Paradoxically, *it begins to resemble reality once it refuses to speak about its totality.* It is on the basis of that double gesture that Romantic *Kunst* (meaning the arts as well as literature) is identified by the Jena Romantics as the medium of reflexivity *kat exochen* (cf. Benjamin 289). But it bears repetition: this has nothing to do with the absolute, nor is literature in any way thereby related to/with the absolute. We're talking auto-referentiality and self-reflexivity. And, for that matter, it has nothing to do with the subject either, as Walter Benjamin pointed out unequivocally: "Im frühromantischen Sinne ist der Mittelpunkt der Reflexion die Kunst, nicht das Ich" (268–69).[18]—in Early Romanticism, the center of reflection is art, not the subject.

WHAT USE?

The literature of and after *Frühromantik* then does not represent the absolute, does not partake of it, nor is it itself absolute. The only way in which it seems reasonable to speak of literature in connection with the absolute is to say that, by turning auto-referential, it absolves itself from mimetic theories of literature (and art), it 'absolutes' itself by trying to sever the ties to referentiality (which it can only ever attempt to do): auto-referential literature is *autonomous* in the sense that it is freed from all the duties of representation and can therefore pursue the "curious relational play" (Novalis) of language and become language to the power of two (and three, or more), triggering processes of semiosis and unending chains of interpretations in a virtual space that is inexhaustible.

The key ideas of the Jena Romantics are that literature is superior to Philosophy; that it produces its own theory and its own criticism insofar as it is transcendental poetry, i.e. reflecting its own conditions of being; and that, by this auto-reflexive turn, it produces an *Ahnung*, an idea of the infinite through its concomitant effect of inexhaustibility.

Incomprehensibly claiming that *Frühromantik* takes its origin in the crisis of the unrepresentability of the subject, L_2N stand all this on its head: according to them, literature depends on Philosophy, is even rigorously determined by it. Hijacking a concept of a literature that contains its own theory, they show, by precept and example, that these texts stand in dire need of extraneous explication and that no reader should be left alone with them, unaccompanied. *AL/LA* appropriates *Frühromantik* and instrumentalizes it for purposes that are very close to home: as literature is subjected, *LA* demonstrates the superiority of (twentieth-century) criticism. Ignoring and denying literature's claims of autonomy and sovereignty, it subordinates this kind of literature in order *to make a case*. The case it makes, behind its back, but open to view, is that of the self-empowerment of criticism. But literature and the arts may be handmaidens to Philosophy in Hegel—they most certainly are not in Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Schelling: they are therefore most unsuitable as key witnesses for this kind of brotherly invasion: they did not ask for outside help. The kind of literature advocated by them does not need that kind of theory at all—it stands in no such need, since it pursues no such purpose. Quite the contrary: since the *Älteste[s] Systemprogramm*, Schelling held that the highest act of reason had to be an aesthetic act. True, *Natur-* and *Transzendentalphilosophie* are forever running on parallel tracks and can never be *one* (cf. Schelling 147), but the latter can *point* to a phenomenon that proves the absolute indifference, or identity, of the real and the ideal: namely, art (cf. Schelling 224). The Philosophy of Art is the true organon of Philosophy (cf. Schelling 161). But the Philosophy of Art can never *be* the thing for which it prepares the way of understanding. Art, says Schelling in the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, is the only and eternal revelation that there is: "die Kunst [ist] die einzige und ewige

Offenbarung, die es gibt" (189). Art, not God. And Philosophy can only prepare the way. Subordination acknowledged and accepted. It is *we*, as critic-philosophers, who are subservient, subordinate. We can only *point* to something that *is* the real thing.

Refusing to historicize the Jena Romantics ("Our approach does not involve a history of romanticism of any sort" [*LA* 2]), they also reject the suspicion that their project is "precisely related to our situation and interest today"—*that* they would find despicable:

> Not that our goal is to establish the 'contemporary relevance of romanticism.' … The present period continues to deny precisely this belonging, which defines us (despite the inevitable divergence introduced by repetition). A veritable romantic *unconscious* is discernible today, in most of the central motifs of our 'modernity.' Not the least result of romanticism's indefinable character is the way it has allowed this so-called modernity to use romanticism as a foil, without ever recognizing—in order not to recognize—that it has done little more than rehash romanticism's discoveries. (*LA* 15, cf. Bernstein 840)

Which is why they warn, like Jefferson, that he who does not know history is doomed to repeat its mistakes: "[H]ow many people, even among the best intentioned, are repeating Jena today—because they have not been able to read it?" (*LA* 13).

But at the end of this critical essay one might well ask: how many, even among the best intentioned, will be deprived of the joyful chance of ever repeating Jena because of the rifts and drifts of L_2N's reading? And Daniel Hoolsema's millennial hope, "Jena was once, and might be again if it but opens us onto the parturition of the era beyond the era of the subject" (865), might well be doomed simply because of their special brand of appropriation. In a critique of *LA* with which one cannot be absolutely happy, Mileur asks whether L_2N are not trying to reinstall philosophy in the guise of 'theory' (cf. Rajan, Clark 28), and his editors, Tilottama Rajan and David Clark, soberly describe their own project a follows:

> Our project of rereading current theory through its covert links to an ambivalently idealistic past that it seeks to displace may thus have as a final consequence the exploration of how theory is involved in what Paul de Man calls "the resistance to theory." … [I]f contemporary theory has such reflexiveness as its starting point, its totalizing pretensions (as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have pointed out) marks its own complicity in the resistance to theory. (6)

Which, one knows, can be identified as only a form of *resistance to reading*.

At the end of his probing reading of *LA*, Daniel Hoolsema comes to the resounding conclusion: "Putting literature into question is the main thrust

of their study. *The Literary Absolute* may therefore be read as a forceful articulation of philosophy's perennial question for literature: *What use?*" (868) And in his final sentence he conjures up an uncanny, eerie image: "Under philosophy's brilliant, piercing light, literature withdraws, only reappearing as an embarrassing refusal to respond to such enquiries, re-emerging as the echo of the question that resembles an answer only in the way a corpse resembles a living body" (868). If that is not reminiscent of Michael Jackson's video of *Thriller*, then maybe of the philosopher Apollonius in John Keats's *Lamia*, under whose piercing eyes the lovely Lamia dies. The message, however, remains the same: Philosophy is out to kill, out to kill literature. *What use* can literature be put to? That question is always the death sentence for literature—pronounced by self-authorized theory with a purpose, with a need. What use indeed?

To reverse the question might be more in the spirit of *Frühromantik*. *So, what use, Philosophy?* It is no wonder, writes Friedrich Schlegel in 1796, if that ends absurdly which began absurdly. Do not expect Philosophy to deliver anything it simply cannot deliver. Whoever expects of Philosophy to make him a Juliet, says Schlegel, will sooner or later have to arrive at that sublime aphorism of Romeo in Shakespeare: "Hang up philosophy! / Unless philosophy can make a Juliet" (qtd. in *KFSA* 2: 70).

ABSOLUT JENA

Absolut Vodka, a *Swedish* vodka brand (first transference) now owned by the French firm of Pernod Ricard (second transference) derives its name from the new kind of fractional distillation invented by Lars Olsson Smith in 1877, a process which yields liquor without fusel alcohol. Because of its purity, it was branded "Absolut Renat Brännvin"—absolutely pure vodka.

In the later twentieth century, however, the brand is at least equally well known for its arty marketing campaigns that highlight special editions, either with special flavors (Peppar, Citron, Kurant, Mandrin, etc.) or artwork on special bottles and/or with special labels or bottle covers (Disco, Brasil, Wallpaper, etc.). There is also a 'cities' series of special editions. Oddly enough, some of these (e.g. London, Moscow, Berlin) contain the regular Absolut Vodka, 'straight' as it were, but others specially flavored varieties (e.g. Rio with orange, mango, and passion fruit, San Francisco with grape, dragon fruit, and papaya, Chicago with olive and rosemary): a third transference.

The success of these marketing campaigns lies in the taste(s), one should hope, but also in a marketing that, curiously enough, still sells as "absolute" what, in many cases, is anything but absolute/pure, that is to say, sells as "absolute" what is, in fact, heavily flavored to serve market niches, to satisfy newly created needs and cravings, not to forget to boost scarcity value and to produce collector's items that are not bought to be consumed in the first place, but as a purely financial investment (as Marx would say: they have no use value,

but only exchange value). You can, of course, order whichever Absolut you want. However, it is not clear at all whether, if you buy Absolute, what you get is absolute in the original sense, whether it is the regular, the right stuff.

Whether or not "Absolut Jena," as successfully marketed in France and in the Anglophone world, is of the regular or of the heavily flavored kind can be found out in two different ways: you either inform yourself before you buy the special edition bottle—or you simply taste it, after you bought it.

NOTES

1. In this essay, unless stated otherwise, *L'absolu littéraire*, abbreviated *AL*, will be quoted from its English translation, *The Literary Absolute*, abbreviated *LA*. The present author is not unaware of the double irony of cascading translations, from which the German gradually fades, until it is almost gone. For reasons of space, the focus of this chapter will be almost exclusively on the primary appropriation by L_2N, not on the secondary discernible in the English translation.
2. Curiously enough, Mileur also takes issue with the fact that L_2N's translators Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester in their "Translators' Introduction" follow L_2N too closely and obediently (cf. 330). I would rather criticize them for mistranslations like "incomprehensible truth" for "unbegriffene [= not yet understood] Wahrheit" (*LA* 64) or for imperfect proofreading (e.g. *Die Hören* for *Die Horen*, *Heinrich von Ofterdinger* for *Ofterdingen, LA* 7, 56, respectively)—but surely to accuse someone of expounding an original text with *too much fidelity* cannot be an admissible charge?
3. "We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his *donnée*: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it" (James 175).
4. Cf. Ernst Behler in Friedrich Schlegel *Kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 18, 3–4; Benjamin 248; Wellek 5–6.
5. Wanning (47) counts eight: the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, Schleiermacher, Ludwig Tieck, Schelling, August Wilhelm's wife Caroline (later Schelling's wife), and Friedrich's love of his life, Dorothea Veit. L_2N add Hülsen—which brings the count to nine—only to mention another eight to eleven that "gravitate" (*LA* 8) around the group. Who *exactly* no. 10 is remains a mystery.
6. Given the terms "necessary" and "vigilance," it is seems impossible not to think of Kant's remarks in "Was ist Aufklärung?" about the *unguided* use of reason—but even to mention this might be regarded as polemical. As Thomas Constantinesco was kind enough to observe (written communication) this translation strengthens the appropriating drift of the original, which reads "on a voulu, chaque fois, accompagner ces textes et en prendre, à notre usage, la mesure théorique."
7. The third reading through which L_2N's reading is in turn refracted is, of course, Martin Heidegger's of Schelling.
8. One of the clearest and most succinct expositions of how, according to L_2N, Kant set the stage for the romantics can be found in Hoolsema 849–50.
9. Please note that, whenever *LA* is followed by Roman numerals, these are the translators' remarks, not L_2N's (except for the quotation of the original blurb, xxi–xxii).
10. "But to call for a verification of the objective quality of rational concepts, i.e. of ideas, and, what is more, on behalf of the theoretical cognition of such a reality, is to demand an impossibility, because absolutely no intuition adequate to them can be given."

11. Another instance where the French original seems a bit more measured than its translation.
12. A major concern in Lacoue-Labarthe's overall œuvre, cf. Martis.
13. N.B. *Not* "logically necessary"—the whole point about regulative ideas is that they are *assumptions*. One should have thought this was elementary. But even the authors of *The Literary Absolute* have problems with these Kantian fundamentals; take, for example, the passage quoted at the very beginning of this section II, "this is so because the form of time, which is the 'form of the internal sense,' permits no *substantial* presentation" (*LA* 30). Since time is an *Anschauungsform*, the insurmountable precondition of any experience, it needs no *Anschauung* itself: we cannot help but being constantly confronted with how it works—*that* is why there can be no *substantial* presentation of it.
14. What I see as an undecided wavering Daniel Hoolsema interprets as a discrepancy between self-perception and external perception, cf. Hoolsema 845: "On the one hand, authors Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy state explicitly that their book's aim is to help usher us beyond the era of the subject of metaphysics. On the other hand, the authors' critics have consistently argued that, because their study of early German Romanticism is finally uncritical, it only ends up endorsing the Romantics' effort to establish the subject in its autarky." See also Hoolsema 845–46 (fn. 2) and 861–62 (fn. 16).
15. In the German original this sentence is not italicized.
16. "Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln sei—Sie machen eine Welt für sich aus—Sie spielen nur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus, und eben darum sind sie so ausdrucksvoll—eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnisspiel der Dinge" (qtd. in Frank 282).
17. "Poesy can only be criticized by poesy. An aesthetic judgement which is not itself a work of art has no right to citizenship in the realm of art" (my translation).
18. There is, by the way, a precursor for that curious endless play of signifiers that defines any structure that is predominantly auto-referential, *vulgo*: art. We find it in Kant's concept of aesthetic ideas (cf. §49 of *The Critique of Judgment*). Aesthetic ideas, as Seyhan (31) points out, are a counterpart (I should say: a chiasmic counterpart) to pure ideas of reason: ideas of reason are concepts without representation (*Begriffe ohne Anschauung*), whereas aesthetic ideas are *Anschauungen* to which no concept is adequate—which triggers a virtually endless process of interpretations. One did not *have* to bring in (undefined) "equivocity" and Maurice Blanchot's *désœuvrement* (cf. Hoolsema 865ff., Critchley 116ff.) to conceptualize that which refuses and escapes conceptualization in literature and therefore is the key driver of its insubordination. It is already part and parcel of the Romantic package.

WORKS CITED

"Absolut Vodka." *Wikipedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolut_Vodka. Web. 22 Sept. 2014.

AL. See Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *L'absolu littéraire*.

Badiou, Alain. *Pocket Pantheon: Figures of Postwar Philosophy*. Trans. David Macey. London, New York: Verso, 2009. Print.

Balfour, Ian. "Review of *The Literary Absolute*." *Modern Language Notes* 104.3 (1989): 727–29. Print.

Beiser, Fredrick. *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism 1781–1801*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002. Print.

———. *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. "Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik." *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 2011. 243–337. Print.

Bernstein, Susan. "Re-re-re-reading Jena." *Modern Language Notes* 110.4 (1995): 834–55. Print.

Bode, Christoph. *Ästhetik der Ambiguität: Zu Funktion und Bedeutung von Mehrdeutigkeit in der Moderne*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1988. Print.

———. "Europe." *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*. Ed. Nicholas Roe. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 126–36. Print.

———. "Coleridge and Philosophy." *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Fredrick Burwick. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. 588–619. Print.

Brown, Marshall. *The Shape of German Romanticism*. Ithaca, London: Cornell UP, 1979. Print.

Critchley, Simon. *Very little … Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*. New York, London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Schellings Abhandlung Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*. Ed. Hildegard Feick. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1971. Print.

Helfer, Martha. *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of "Darstellung" in German Critical Discourse*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1996. Print.

Hoolsema, Daniel. "The Echo of an Impossible Future in 'The Literary Absolute.'" *Modern Language Notes* 119.4 (2004): 845–68. Print.

James, Henry. *The Art of Criticism: Henry James on the Theory and Practice of Fiction*. Eds. William Veeder and Susan M. Griffin. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986. Print.

Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Hamburg: Meiner, 1956. Print.

———. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Hamburg: Meiner, 1974. Print.

———. *The Critique of Judgement*. Trans. James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992. Print.

LA. See Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, and Jean-Luc Nancy. *L'absolu littéraire: Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*. Paris: Seuil, 1978. Print.

———. *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester. Albany: State U of New York P, 1988. Print.

Martis, John. *Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe: Representation and the Loss of the Subject*. New York: Fordham UP, 2005. Print.

Meitinger, Serge. "Idéalisme et poétique," *Romantisme: Revue du Dix-Neuvième Siècle* 45 (1984): 3–24. Print.

Newmark, Kevin. "*L'absolu littéraire*: Friedrich Schlegel and the Myth of Irony." *Modern Language Notes* 107 (1992): 905–930. Print.

Pfau, Thomas. "Review of *The Literary Absolute*." *Studies in Romanticism* 29.2 (1990): 309–13. Print.

Rajan, Tilottama, and David L. Clark, eds. *Intersections: Nineteenth-Century Philosophy and Contemporary Theory*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1995. Print.

Rajan, Tilottama, and Arkady Plotnitsky, eds. *Idealism without Absolutes: Philosophy and Romantic Culture*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2004. Print.

Redfield, Marc. *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the* Bildungsroman. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996. Print.

———. "Romanticism, *Bildung* and the Literary Absolute." *Lessons of Romanticism: A Critical Companion*. Eds. Thomas Pfau and Robert F. Gleckner. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. 41–54. Print.

Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Schelling*. Comp. and ed. Michaela Boenke. München: Diederichs, 1995. Print.

Schlegel, Friedrich. *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. Ed. Ernst Behler. 35 vols. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958ff. [*KFSA*]. Print.

Seyhan, Azade. *Representation and Its Discontents: The Critical Legacy of German Romanticism*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992. Print.

Sheffy, Rakefet. "Review of *The Literary Absolute*." *Poetics Today* 9.4 (1988): 891–92. Print.

Wanning, Berbeli. *Friedrich Schlegel zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius, 1999. Print.

Wellek, René. *The Romantic Age*. 1955. *A History of Modern Criticism 1750–1950*. Vol. 2. London: Cape, 1970. Print.

2 History and Poetry

Fundamental Aspects and Effects of the Relations between Literature and Philosophy in English Romanticism

Eric Dayre

This chapter begins with some of the original founding expressions of Romanticism, key terms, and definitions of poetry, such as "emotion recollected in tranquillity," "willing suspension of disbelief," and their origin in philosophical thought. In doing so, I refer to the philosophical tradition that is present and modified in Romantic thought. I then turn to the meaning Romantic poetry retains within contemporary philosophy. Such a cross-examination will, I think, help us understand the particular import of the Romantic moment within the literary and philosophical traditions and the reasons why the Romantic dialogue of traditions and modes are still effective today in contemporary theory and debates regarding poetic possibility, the past, present and future meaning of poetry, and literature in general.

The key definitions of Romantic poetry did not fall from the sky. They were inherited from the Enlightenment. They did not emerge from the rationalistic aspects of the period, but from the tragic undercurrents of Godwin's political thought. Godwin is a central figure, whose role as a master and intimate counterpoint helps to understand the poetic turn that the first generation of Romantics, and especially Coleridge, consciously brought within the philosophical and literary landscape. Nicholas Roe traces Godwin's radical influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge but he does not see or analyze the Aristotelian subtext of these definitions, positions, and dialogues. The reference to Aristotle was obvious for a philhellenist like Coleridge.

I then concentrate on Coleridge's modifications of Godwin's treatment of Aristotle's approach of poetry (or rather *poiesis*)—and this I do in connection with Coleridge's diagnosis of the symptoms of the disease affecting the philosophy and history of his time, namely, the disconnection of imagination and understanding. Coleridge's idea of a cure resides in the connection of Idealism and Realism, in the renewed possibility of an active participation of ideas and things, in the possibility of a history-making and *reforming* writing (hence the mission of poetry and imagination above understanding). In *The Statesman's Manual* (1816), Coleridge's philosophical project was to define the form of "ideas" as "educts" (not products) of the Imagination, as ideas which would be both regulative and constitutive of human action and "experience" that were not yet included in the nomenclature of philosophy. "Whether Ideas are regulative only," writes Coleridge,

"according to Aristotle and Kant; or likewise CONSTITUTIVE, and one with the power and Life of Nature, according to Plato, and Plotinus … is the highest *problem* of Philosophy, and not part of its nomenclature" (113–14; Appendix E). The tenet here is that for Coleridge poetry is the missing element in the nomenclature of philosophy, and the element that should then be considered as the very articulation of the central question or problem of philosophy and its relation to what he names "nature," "power," "life," and eventually "man's history."

The nexus of *Romanticism and Philosophy* revolves around the threefold relationship of Philosophy, History, and Poetry, for these domains are those that articulate and address the idea of a "general" experience of Man and the world. I will examine Coleridge's translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* 9, 1451b, which specifically contrasts these three domains, modes, and types of experience. Coleridge's reading of Aristotle and his *Poetics* is noticeably more constitutive-idealist than regulative-realist and this is visible in his translations (or should we say, use and slight abuse) of Aristotle. His specific rephrasing of 1451b in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) takes up Godwin's own interpretation and transcription of the same passage of *Poetics,* in the 1797 essay on *History and Romance* (neither Godwin nor Coleridge engage in a proper translation of Aristotle, as we shall see).

The third part of the chapter examines the philosophical heritage and how the question of the exchange of poetry and philosophy according to Romantic approaches is still active in contemporary philosophical debates, namely through its use in Deconstruction by de Man and Derrida, for they both mention Coleridge without going into the details of his central position in Romantic theory. This position is widely acknowledged and has become a sort of "cliché," but it is perhaps not fully recognized for its variety and importance in terms of general philosophy, and in praxeographic terms of what literature does to our understanding of things—i.e. not simply of "things as they are," which is Godwin's problem, but of things as they are shaped by poetry. In other words, the question is: what is "poetic truth"? This question is one that, to my mind, directly addresses deconstructive thought, in the sense that deconstruction in Derrida and de Man involves "some degree" of poetic language to redefine (destroy and reveal) the metaphysical logic of philosophy.

For an appreciation of Colerige that is less allusive than Derrida's and more contextual than de Man's, a close historical and translational examination of Coleridge's treatment of his philosophical references is required, especially because Coleridge addresses the idea of poetry and man's relations to truth in the world "in general." The examination of what poetry does to the general understanding of things according to Coleridge is never completely acknowledged by de Man or Derrida. Hence, this chapter attempts, as it comes to a close, to reach the truth of poetry in a close critical connection to Derrida's and de Man's understanding of Coleridge, but with a complete reassessment of the function of allegory in the connection of verse and philosophy.

Romanticism is central to the debate on the nature of symbol and allegory as revived by Walter Benjamin's *Trauerspiel*, through the problem of creative imagination in its relation to conceptual construction, because the object of imagination is to articulate the forms of our temporal experience of life and history. We shall therefore try to understand how it is possible to situate poetry in the experience of time (in general), and thereby understand our own conception of time. The treatment of "time" in Romanticism must be considered because, in many ways, it is still today's central question if we are to understand the link between literature and philosophy. That is, why and how is verse necessary? And then what does the link between poetry and philosophy become if we try to understand the romantic heritage in deconstruction? That is, as we stand at the crossroads of a philosophical understanding of literature and of a *textual* approach as well as a more *literary* and, for that matter, increasingly *poetic* reading of philosophy.

THE POETIC TURN: FROM GODWIN TO COLERIDGE

L'absolu littéraire was published in 1978.This fundamental book on German Romanticism at Jena was a landmark in France and was instrumental in shaping the contemporary French approach to the relation between Philosophy and Romanticism in Germany. The adverse counterpart to the influence of this book is that up to now in France, Romanticism taken outside the French Romantic current has mainly been understood in relation to German Romanticism. However, as they were working on their book, Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe realized that English Romanticism presented a specific interest and diverged from its German counterpart. The diverging paths of these two varieties of Romanticism, or the divided nature of Romantic thought, became the object of an analysis that could help rewrite the history of modernity's origins.

One key to the difference between the various forms of Romanticism is the treatment of the literary genres and in the meaning of the notion of genre—"*genos*." Schlegel, the most influential Romantic theorist, heavily contributed to the *Athenaeum*, generally considered to be the manifesto of German Romanticism. The Jena frame of mind saw Romanticism as an attempt to go beyond the rational concepts used by philosophy and abolish the distinctions between genres, leading to the notion of "progressive, universal poetry" (175). Literature could summon and liberate all possible textual practices, and Schlegel identified two means for literature to create its own relation to the Absolute: the use of the fragment and the use of the novel, which he defined as the "Socratic dialogues of our time" (145).

In his 1797 essay *Of History and Romance,* Godwin also gave the novel a central role in bringing out the true sense of historical necessity. He defined the romance, or novel, as a tool both for understanding and

shaping the times and as the best instrument to redefine the understanding of history: "If then history be little better than romance under a graver name, it may not be foreign to the subject here treated, to enquire into the credit due to that species of literature, which bears the express stamp of invention, and calls itself romance or novel" (368). Hence his statement that "we should be apt to pronounce that romance was a bolder species of composition than history" (370). Paradoxically, over the course of English Romanticism, this "express stamp of invention," which Godwin saw exemplified in the novel, became more visible in the writing of poetry than in novel writing. English Romanticism began by a kind of a poetic "big bang," or turn. This notion of a turn implies a strong and active criticism of the novel, both in form and content.

Schlegel could imagine a form of passage from fragmentary forms to the novel form, but Coleridge, to take *the* English example, did not defend the dialectical continuity or the dialectical potential of the novel. He was more preoccupied with defining the potential of poetry. For both Wordsworth and Coleridge, the grounds for rejecting the novel lied in the project of poetry. Poetry is placed within prose "when prose is well written" (Wordsworth 297), which is to say, when writing matters more than storytelling. Even if stories were still being told in the *Lyrical Ballads* for instance, those stories aimed at producing forms and thoughts that reached beyond verisimilitude, strict rationalism, or realism. In other words, English Romantic poetry began by reframing the necessity of verisimilitude that Godwin had defined as the specific and exceptional mission ("stamp of invention") of the novel.

Godwin chose the genre of the novel to reveal the most hidden aspects of the historical necessity that he had thoroughly commented upon in his *Enquiry on Political Justice*. But in *Caleb Williams*, we are driven to witness a dreadful result: no matter how hard one tries to escape or change things, these things remain "as they are." And yet, "things as they are" are nonetheless never "things as they seem," or things as one "imagines" them to be. They escape rational control, and their truth lies beyond verisimilitude and defies expectation. The depth of Godwin's sense of necessity is such that it can never be restricted to a factual development. In other words, immanent fact is ruled by transcendent necessity which is itself better met by novels and romance than by chronicles of history. That is why the novel or romance is "necessary": it connects the categories of "fate" and "invention." It transports necessity in order to invent new lines of reasoning, nourished and fed by its own fictional character. Godwin's idea of necessity involves the superseding of rational history by a form of imaginative history capable of integrating unexpected, incredible, or unlikely events. In other words, the verisimilar construction of the novel must surpass itself by creating new inventions; it must force probability out of its limitations in order to recover its inner truth, tragic as it may be, as is the case in *Caleb Williams*.

Romantic prose, when it is "well written" and thus defined "as" poetry in Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (297), changes the usual or

natural uses of vernacular prose from within. Romantic poetry tries to invent new forms of necessity, therefore superseding Godwin's tragic prose and his sense of the philosophic audacity of the novel. The poetic turn, above and over the novel, is made possible by the insertion of possibilities challenging Godwin's conception of necessity, possibilities that reach beyond those of fiction, therefore employing literary invention for other purposes. The Romantic idea is to supersede tragic destiny and the tragic novel by poetry as a form of suspension and tranquillity that achieves its aim through the treatment of emotion. Poetry is meant to be the cathartic element missing in Godwin's tragic novel and inventive fiction.

The implications of the transfer from novel to poetry are manifold and again Aristotelian through the recourse to *catharsis*. The underlying principle is that Romantic *super*-verisimilitude (prophetic vision) has its negative moment of *anti*-verisimilitude, in the same way as the idealist proposal of a "supernature" destroys and reassesses the former conception of "nature." Therefore, the natural world, man, and the nature of history encounter a new idea of necessity that is based on the proximity between poetry and philosophy as it is made available only in poetry. The reappraisal of poetry by the Romantics takes Godwin's reappraisal of the novel one step further, while simultaneously negating the capacity of novel writing. Poetry seems to be freer than the novel in defining the type of verisimilitude it necessitates, but the links between Godwin and the Romantics are very strong. The ties extend to specific and key concepts. Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" echoes Godwin's words in the *Enquiry*, Book IV, Chapter 8, which link "necessity" to the writing of history and the state of intellectual tranquility:

> A further consequence of the doctrine of necessity is its tendency to make us survey all events with *a tranquil and placid temper*, and approve and disapprove without impeachment to our self-possession. It is true, that events may be contingent, as to any knowledge we possess respecting them, however certain they are in themselves. … *When the person recollects with clearness that the event is over, his mind grows composed; but presently he feels as if it were in the power of God or man to alter it, and his agitation is renewed.* To this may be further added the impatience of curiosity; but philosophy and reason have an evident tendency to prevent useless curiosity from disturbing our peace.
>
> He therefore who regards all things past, present, and to come as links of an indissoluble chain will, as often as he recollects this comprehensive view, find himself assisted to surmount the tumult of passion; and be enabled to reflect upon the moral concerns of mankind with the same clearness of perception, the same firmness of judgment, and the same constancy of temper, as we are accustomed to do upon the truths of geometry. (358–59, my emphasis)

"Intellectual tranquillity" in Godwin furnishes the idea of an appeased mode of relation to historical events that can themselves be appeased in return. The sense of necessity and its recognition through ataraxy here appear in terms that are akin to Wordsworth's tenets in the 1800 "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*; the forms of recollection and comprehensive peace or tranquility that are united and made stable in Wordsworth's definition of the origin of poetry seem to concentrate both the movement of past emotions and the peace that Godwin expected from philosophy and reason. In other words, poetry acts where Godwinian reason once did. As a man of the Enlightenment, Godwin reflected upon moral tranquility with the notions of his time. The more intuitive Wordsworth chose to consider the greater availability of poetic writing to achieve the same purpose. Still, it is very interesting to notice that in the "Preface" and in the theoretical developments that were to follow during two decades, Coleridge and Wordsworth used terms that connected them to former advocates of the novel.

In such a chain of references, Wordsworth's and Coleridge's Romantic conceptions of poetry appear as attempts to think political justice within poetic justness or accuracy (through tonal games, dramatic intimacy, and the specifics of poetic writing: rhyme, rhythm, and verse). Poetic accuracy, its precision or objective quality, is therefore a concrete counterpoint to subjective invention, a complement authorizing the individual voice or tone of the poet to speak for itself and for all, and to act above all in a well-balanced mode of relating to things that preserves the possibility of an ideal reference and a sense of universality. Poetry does not aim at analyzing things "as they are" (in the Godwinian sense), but strives to synthesize things as they should be, as they ought to be, or as they can still be imagined and made special by and for everyone reading and hearing poetry. The lyrical continuity between the ideal and reality depends upon the continuity and articulation between necessity and some degree of nonverisimilitude allowed in poetic language. The imagination of supernatural things is both an aim of poetry and a tool for poetry, an instrument and a result, an image and the correct forging of the image.

The Romantic correlation of act and action, the objective correlative or "symbol," cannot be understood simply from an aesthetic standpoint. The idea of poetic tranquility as a mode of being in time finds a new treatment in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* in 1817, with the definition of poetry as a "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith" (2: 6). This formula is a highly methodic attempt to supersede Wordsworth's definition of poetic tranquility and, consequently, Godwin's subtext as well. Coleridge's formula places itself (i.e. the critique of skepticism and therefore the search for truth) within the element of will and faith and not within the power of reason. Whereas Wordsworth's tranquility could still be connected with moral and regulative reason (a form of reason accessible through recollection, as opposed to raw emotion), Coleridge's formula promotes the slowing down of emotions and a more general assent

to the forms of history, as events are re-assessed by being poetically suspended and interrupted for a measured and limited time. "Suspensive" faith is thus not simply a state of mind but an active exertion—both a suspension and a technique, or a constitutive method to expect or hope something as it is being redefined by an ongoing process. "Poetic faith" is Coleridge's understanding of Aristotelian *poiesis*.

Like active tranquility and recollection, "suspension" is a certain type of gesture or fabrication, a *poiein* in the Greek sense of the term. Poetry is a doing *in* time and a doing *of* time: a method of pre-prediction and a preliminary step to prophecy, and it is indeed in that sense that Coleridge systematically integrates the vocabulary of history, prophecy, poetical prudence, and providence in the definitions of the symbol during the period from 1816 to 1818.

Coleridgean "suspension" specifies the Wordsworthian notion of "tranquillity," and centers on the textual construction of a form of time which can regulate the sense of necessity. It is not so much the Absolute *as such*, which is sought in this context, but the Absolute in its connection to the world, in the sense of that which actually defines the world of a fully human experience. "Suspension" fixes the "occasion" of necessity. Poetry therefore involves a form of answer to Godwin's questions and remarks in Book IV, Chapter 8 of the *Enquiry*: "It would be of infinite importance to the cause of science and virtue to express ourselves upon all occasions in the language of necessity" (359–60).

In the wake of Wordsworth, we could maintain that poetry is prose when prose becomes necessary or poetic. Wordsworth and Coleridge initiate a poetic turn in the conception of historical experience because they define the poetic experience of history (formerly defined as an intellectual exertion and acquisition of philosophical tranquility made more possible by romance) as the suspension of philosophical modes of questioning the historical condition of man and, first of all, as the "suspension" of "prose" considered as the pervasive mode of rational disquisition and as the medium of philosophical discourse as well as the medium of novels. Poetry is philosophical per se, and it embodies, suspends or institutes necessity by positing itself as a "text" acting though the suspension of prose, as a text that matters in its own suspensive exhibition and assertive search for the language of necessity within the necessity of language itself. Poetic arrangement or "poetic function" deals with fate or destiny in general, and that is also the reason why Coleridge calls it a form of faith or belief in its own right.

COLERIDGE, ARISTOTLE, AND POETRY

If we keep circling around the origins and definitions of poetry (and faith), if the link between poetry and the philosophy of poetry verges on tautology, it is precisely because the original tradition that connects poetry and philosophy is always kept in sight. *Poiesis* was kept in sight by Godwin as he defined

the functions of the novel and of romance; it was kept in mind by Coleridge who saw *poiesis* as an act of the imagination. In the Western tradition, it is Aristotle's *Poetics* that established the link between poetry and philosophy, and this was the matter of *Poetics* 9, 1451b 5–10. Another part of 1451b in *Poetics* dealt with the question of verisimilitude as well. It is on the basis of this particular passage that Godwin had given novels the *poietic* capacity of renewing history through a closer look at the probabilities and possibilities of history. The echoes of Aristotle were also quite strong in Godwin's *Enquiry.* Aristotle wrote:

> It clearly follows that the poet or "maker" should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions. And even if he chances to take a historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker. (1451b 27–33)

The Aristotelian remarks and the wider context of *Poetics* were central to Godwin's remark in *Of History and Romance* in 1797*:* "*we should be apt to pronounce that romance was a bolder species of composition than history*" (370, emphasis added). The comparative structure of the statement, "a bolder species of composition than history," directly reminds one of the passage in *Poetics* that deals with the definition of *poiesis* properly speaking:

> It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. … The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. *Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history*: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. (1451b 5–10, emphasis added)

Godwin's rephrasing applies the Aristotelian definition of *poiesis* to romance. The term "composition" is meant as a translation of *genos*, and the adjective "bolder" is the quite daring rewording of the Greek adjective *spoudaioteron*, from *spoudaios* which means "high," "noble," or "elevated" and "full of zeal." Twenty years later, Chapter 22 of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* was to contain the same reference to Aristotle: "the essence of poetry, which Aristotle pronounces to be *spoudaiotaton kai philosophotaton genos*, the most intense, weighty and philosophical product of human art; adding, as the reason, that it is the most catholic and abstract" (2: 126).[1] Coleridge used *Poetics* 1451b in order to extract the philosophical element in poetic fabrication.

This quotation, or that which we deem to be a quotation in Coleridge, has largely been prepared in *Biographia Literaria* by the preceding descriptions of the ideal effect and balance achieved by verse and rhyme in literary composition or *poiesis:* the interfusion of the same through and by the different, as well as all the qualities related to the secondary imagination and the symbol. Here though, Coleridge replaces Aristotle's comparative judgment with a superlative: "the most … philosophical," adding the adjectives "intense" and "weighty" to boot. By replacing "*spoudaioteron*" with "*spoudaiotaton*," and "*philosophoteron*" with "*philosophotaton*," Coleridge writes "the most intense," "the most philosophical" instead of the original "more philosophical" in Aristotle's words, and substitutes his constitutive appreciation of *poiesis* to the regulative definition of Aristotle.

The ideal character of the *genos* or "species of composition" proper to poetry *weighs* within and upon philosophy as its "most philosophical" weight; or again: the weightiest element of philosophy is the particular charge of poetry: verse, rhymes, structure, and wholeness of purpose. Coleridge chose to erase the "elevated" or "noble" character of *poiesis* in Aristotle, and insisted on the notion of "weight" that directed poetry toward the center of gravity of its kenotic philosophical "essence" and not toward celestial spheres and moral grandeur. This center is "human," not so much in the sense of a moral accomplishment and noble heroic qualities, but through ethical qualities: "universal" ("catholic") and "abstract." The refusal of "elevation" is understandable as it reminds the reader of the Wordsworthian origin of the concept of poetry in the allegedly lower and sober element of "prose" (when "it is well written") as it can be universally shared ("catholic"). But the adjective "abstract" refers to Coleridge's own idea as it then diverged from Wordsworth's 1800 "Preface." It illustrates Coleridge's critical replacement of the "prose of men" by the prose of thinkers who are capable of reaching the "best thoughts" in "the best language," and it confirms his rather severe criticism of the "Defects of Wordsworth's Poetry" in Chapter 22 and Chapter 17 of *Biographia Literaria:* "The best parts of language the product of philosophers, not of clowns or shepherds" (2: 40). For both Coleridge and Wordsworth, one aspect of poetry resides among things and defines prose as a mode of human experience; poetry is not pompous ostentation, and neither is it idle talk; but Coleridge specifically means that *poetry as such* weighs on philosophy and gives philosophy its proper weight and balance and its own gravity or gravitation inside the sphere of Romantic imaginative verse. This is the aspect by which Coleridge differs from Wordsworth's notion of poetry "as prose," and the reason why he promotes verse as the proper medium for what *poiesis* means and effectuates for philosophical men who are capable of abstraction.

In *Biographia Literaria,* not too far after the mention of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Chapter 22*,* verse was defined as "a correspondent weight and sanity of the Thoughts and Sentiments" (2: 144), and stood ready to take part in the appreciation of *poiesis* as being the most intense, weighty and philosophical

product of art. It is interesting to see how Coleridge reintroduces the necessity of verse (the fact that verse is not simply an instrument, but a means in the Greek sense of *meson*, i.e. middle term, means, or intermediary notion) to consolidate the Aristotelian relations between poetry and philosophy, while at the same time protecting Wordsworth's fundamental tenets and his appreciation of the supposedly "natural" quality of poetry: "metre [is] *the proper form of poetry*" (emphasis added), and poetry is "imperfect and defective without metre. Metre, therefore, having been connected with poetry most often and by a peculiar fitness, whatever else is combined with metre must, though it be not itself essentially poetic, have nevertheless some property in common with poetry, as an intermedium of affinity, a sort (if I may dare borrow a well-known phrase from technical chemistry), of mordaunt between it and the super-added metre" (2: 216).

Words drawn from "technical chemistry"—"affinity," "intermedium," "mordaunt"—introduce unity as the result of verse and meter in poetry considered as the weightiest philosophical genre or species of composition. "The intermedium of affinity," the "chemistry" of verse, the "mordaunt," the "peculiar fitness" of lines—all these terms point out the final touch, the completion of the *combining*, *connecting*, and *intermediary genos* with its peculiar highest or *spoudaiotaton* virtue. They designate the qualities that convince us to see poetry as philosophy—and we could even say: to see it as a philosophy that possesses the other Aristotelian ethical sense of *spoudaios*—the quality of a person who achieves virtuous action and perceives the truth of all things, who is the "rule and measure" of all Good (*Nicomachean Ethics* III: 6, 1113a 32–33)—and the example of a perfect man who convinces more ordinary minds by converting them through the affinity and mordaunt of his goodness.

In *Biographia Literaria,* at the end of Chapter 14, Coleridge expands on the definition and answers the question "What is poetry?" by stressing the similarity of poetry with the man-poet. This move to construct the "symbolic" evidence of poetry defines *anthropos genos,* or "manhood," as "poetic ethos." The ethos of the poet is the quality of his poetry, and vice versa, in a combined conversion:

> What is poetry?—is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet?—that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under

> their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control, *laxis effertur habenis,* reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. (2: 15–17)

Conversion is considered as the efficient way to pass from a regulative to a constitutive notion of life. The temporal quality of poetic action constitutes a strong point in this definition. The symbolic weight and balance of form and thought in poetry translates itself as an event and as a form of unquestionable novelty. It involves a historical event in a new form, it institutes a revelation. Bearing on poetry as the "essence" of manhood, the former excerpt condenses a definition of the "symbolic imagination" that had been defined as the "tautegorical symbol" in the *Statesman's Manual* (1816): "a symbol, which is always tautegorical [this expression, though mentioned and written in Greek, is in fact another fake Coleridgean quotation], characterized by the translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the individual, above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal" (30). Strictly speaking, this is another explanation of the regulative and constitutive character, or so to speak, of the *spoudaiotaton* Idea in the Appendix E of the *Stateman's Manual.* On the historical immanent plane, the symbol is a form containing both an experience of tradition and of contemporaneity. On the transcendent mystical plane, in a symbol, infinite eternal times, past and future times coexist within present time. Romantic "poetic contemporaneity" merges tradition and actuality, present action and future promise. Poetry connects, gathers and suspends past and future in the virtuous feelings, sensations, ethical qualities and historical evidence of its own contemporariness.

ROMANTIC RHYTHMS IN PHILOSOPHY: COLERIDGE AND DE MAN

The twofold reference to Romantic poetry and to the exceptional quality of Romantic time perception is more than active today. As it always involved a treatment and questioning of the idea of the "contemporary" and a conception of the "historical event" as it "manifests" or "reveals" itself, Romantic poetry attracted contemporary philosophy of "Time and Being," of "Time and History," notably in the two diverging wakes of Heidegger and

Benjamin as tackled and expressed in Deconstruction and Poststructuralist philosophy.

I now approach contemporary readings of the Romantic symbol in relation to the theoretical implications of poetry, as poetry serves to interrogate the form of *Ereignis*, "event" or "actual" experience, and acts as a truthful revelation or phenomenology of an experience which is otherwise felt to be hidden by conventional (or nonpoetic) language.

De Man and Derrida attempted to deconstruct the Romantic symbol, which they viewed as a totalitarian form and as a *faux semblant* of organic unity resulting from a form of aesthetic ideology that did not allow enough space to indeterminate and open possibilities. The criticism of the Romantic symbol took a decisive part in the anti-Structuralist strategies of these authors. But did they really understand the Romantic poetical turn as such? Perhaps not completely, and I will show why and how.

Derrida's and de Man's deconstructive approaches aim at debunking the so-called "Romantic" myth of unity contained in the symbol. They are based on Walter Benjamin's thesis in the *Trauerspiel* or *Origin of German Tragic Drama,* which stresses the actual disruptive function of allegory in order to counteract the dream or the illusion of achieving symbolic unity. In the introduction of "Allegory and Trauerspiel," Benjamin wrote:

> The most remarkable thing about the popular use of the term [symbol] is that a concept which, as it were categorically, insists on the indivisible unity of form and content, should nevertheless serve the philosophical extenuation of that impotence which, because of the absence of dialectical rigour, fails to do justice to content in form analysis and to form in the aesthetics of content. For this abuse occurs wherever in the work of art the manifestation of an idea is declared a symbol. The unity of the transcendental and the material object, which constitutes the paradox of the theological symbol, is distorted into a relationship between appearance and essence. (160)

We shall return later to the key notion of the dialectical "stringency" or "rigour" that is necessary to understand the meaning of the poetic symbol in Coleridge and escape the mish-mash of identifying and uniting form and content too easily and rapidly. First of all, it is interesting to notice that Derrida sees in Coleridge one of the "ghosts" of Deconstruction. He writes: "Is it by chance that, in the very first steps by which he reopened the problem of allegory, Paul de Man convoked the ghost of Coleridge, and the phantom of which Coleridge speaks, precisely in relation to allegory?" (80). The problem de Man poses is initially derived from Gadamer who asked: "is the symbolizing activity not actually still bound today by the survival of mythological and allegorical tradition?" (qtd. in de Man 191). In *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge used the term "phantom proxy" as a synonym for "allegory." But there is more in this reference. For Derrida,

Coleridge is bound in the network of the wider problem of language and spectrality to which Benjamin has attached the notion of allegory. Derrida writes: "we shall never define the trace or the phantom, without ironically or allegorically, appealing from one to the other" (80). That statement is quite provocative when it comes to mentioning Coleridge who is allegedly one of the most prominent representatives of the theory of "symbolic" imagination.

De Man tried to criticize the notion of symbol as it was defined by Coleridge, and he wished to pinpoint the fact that, in the end, the difference between symbol and allegory was a metaphysical illusion. He also thought that, in the process of deconstruction addressing the symbolic unity of form and content, the possibility for language to say anything about the concreteness of things was lost. Poetry then would simply be the enactment of the loss. He based his analysis on a reading of the opposition between symbol and allegory that Coleridge had detailed in the passage of the *Statesman's Manual* we have already quoted. Implicitly using Benjamin's remarks in "Allegory and Trauerspiel" in his own appreciation of Coleridge's tautegorical symbol as defined in *The Statesman's Manual*, de Man noted:

> a certain degree of ambiguity is manifest. After associating the thinness (essential meagerness?) of allegory with a lack of substantiality, Coleridge wants to stress by contrast, the worth of the symbol. One would expect the latter to be valued for its organic or material richness, but instead the notion of "translucence" is suddenly put in evidence. … The material substantiality dissolves and becomes a mere reflection of a more original unity that does not exist in the material world. It is all the more surprising to see Coleridge, in the final part of the passage, characterize allegory as being a mere reflection. In truth the spiritualization of the symbol has been carried so far that the moment of material existence by which it was originally defined has now become altogether unimportant; symbol and allegory alike now have a common origin beyond the world of matter. The reference, in both cases, to a transcendental source, is now more important than the kind of relationship that exists between the reflection and its source. It becomes of secondary importance whether this relationship is based, as in the case of the symbol, on the organic coherence of the synecdoche, or whether, as in the case of allegory it is a pure decision of the mind. Both figures designate, in fact, the transcendental source, albeit in an oblique and ambiguous way. (192)

De Man directly questions the idea of symbolic "translucence" and takes it for granted that translucence concerns the eye of the mind and that a symbol gives a form of access to a spiritual source from which it emerges to the light, thereby defining or "constituting" an "idea as phenomenon" in the way Appendix E of *The Statesman's Manual* defined, or rather sought

to define the "Idea" per se. In his criticism of the notion of "symbolic phenomenon," de Man even goes as far as to suggest that there is no "idea" in a symbol or in an allegory, and that allegory simply denotes a pure decision of the mind to connect form and content. This is strictly an anti-idealist or anti-participative statement, for if light does not emerge from its own translucence (if there is no *phainein*), then there is no unity of revelation or phenomenon in the form itself, hence no unity of form and meaning, of subject and object, of poetry and philosophy, therefore no *poiesis*, and just a rhetoric. Such a reading drastically reduces Coleridge's interest for the mystical components of history to a mechanism of vain spiritualization. Suffice to say for the moment that de Man's position is somewhat naive.

De Man's method and interpretation may well be convincing and seductive at first, as it clearly aims at debunking the Heideggerian *Lichtung*, but Heidegger is not Coleridge, and Coleridge was very cautious to avoid dematerializing the symbol. Coleridge deliberately and precisely talks of the concreteness of the symbol, of its historical and metrical linguistic character, while disparaging the absence of subject matter when he defines allegory as the translation of "abstract notions into a picture-language." By choosing to view Coleridge's refusal of allegory as an expression of Romantic anxiety, de Man seems to espy a subconscious critical breach in Coleridge's symbol theory, and he extends the allegorical dematerializing to the symbol itself: "symbol and allegory alike now have a common origin beyond the world of matter." A closer attention to Coleridge's texts would show, on the contrary, that neither allegory nor symbol is dematerialized. In fact, in Coleridge, the abstract quality of philosophy does not imply a divorce from its most concrete and actual elements, and the exceptionally revealing character of poetic language is never severed from what the Romantics called prose or language in general. Quite the opposite in fact, since the materials of poetry are precisely *then,* not the common images, but the essential auxiliaries of verse, meter, and rhythm considered as *intermedia* of the poetic weighing and revelation of all meanings in general. These materials belong to language and human *ethos*.

Symbolic translucence for Coleridge in fact means a perceived idea, the truth and efficacy of a sequence of words, and the way in which truth can mediate, shape, or entail a possible experience, a newness connected to some unseen aspect of the past. Translucence is less a result than a process; it is a *poiein*, a doing, a movement, a passing, a suspension between present time and indefinite time, a form of historical experience that opens up to a more general and, therefore, to a more philosophical meaning. It posits its own form as *poiesis* in the Aristotelian sense of the term. A symbol is neither an image nor a reflection of a "higher" thing or idea that "does not" exist, it simply is a means of making time available and experience possible. It is the *meddling* of a *medium* and a *middle*. A symbol is not a reflection or an image of something, but, first of all, it is a *time-maker*, a way of putting things and men into and inside time. Coleridge ends his characterization of

the tautegorical symbol by the phrase "through and in the temporal," which clearly implies the rendering of something as it undergoes the passage *of* time and a passage *in* time, thus putting the symbol on the same level of existence as men, as was the case in the definition of "What is a poem?" As readers who are also men, we are asked to understand how eternity is perceived, felt, and sensed in actual time. Therefore, we are requested to understand that real or ordinary time can be made to acquire the surreal or exceptional quality, which is that of the "eternal now." Poetry as "time suspension" is the linguistic locus or ethos in which such a quality may appear and, so to speak, *naturalize* the mystical experience of the "eternal instant."

By forgetting the poetic construction of time in Coleridge, de Man transfers the symbol into a pure "rhetoric of temporality." He produces a caricature of Coleridge, and for that matter, of Benjamin's positions in the *Trauerspiel*. He presents his analysis as the deconstruction of Coleridge's ambiguity, but he refuses to understand or consider the elements of poetry as they result from the Coleridgean interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

The core of the symbol is the making of time, temporality being then considered as a process leading to meaning, as the constructive part of perception within the frame of time and meaning acting jointly. The symbol is not a sudden vision, but a process in which vision is framed and suspended to the experience of time, to the translation of time as it reaches some element of meaning to build upon. In that sense, a symbol is an act of the will that cannot be disconnected from allegory considered as a "decision of the mind" and it is an act of freedom, abstract as it may be.

The process of Time-meaning means "experiencing Time" itself. The temporal specificity of the symbol or *poiesis* is its ability to give time its rhythm and spin, the pulse that makes it possible for men to experience a cadence, "the eternity that shelters in its bosom the time that is submitted to its power" according to Schelling's phrase. The poetic or suspensive presentation of the way time literally weighs upon present times liberates, protects, and suspends all times in the same process. The experience of time-meaning and time-cadence is made available in verse. The rhythmical quality of the symbol is that which makes it possible to act, to construct and strengthen the dialectics of form and content as was also required by Benjamin in his appraisal of "allegory" versus "symbol." The phenomenon as well as the idea of a specific pulse or rhythm can actually strengthen and change the dialectics of form and content. Walter Benjamin knew that perfectly well, and that is the reason why he invented the concept of the "dialectical image," which (although it is massively interruptive) has the same flash-like quality, the same instantaneous redefining effect as Coleridgean poetic "suspension." This type of dialectics is based on the rhythmical practice of form and content in which time and history are gradually felt as ways to give its actual meaning to time and thereby create Time-meaning. In Benjamin, translation as the "task" follows the same proceedings as poetry in Coleridge's conception.

"Time-meaning" (or time considered as the experience of meaning, or time considered as the event of meaning, as "pulsating meaning" so to speak) is thus the "intermediary" notion that is expressed in Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief" and in the rhythmical practice (i.e. processual *action*) of verse and meter that confirms that poetry constructs a general or philosophical experience (of time) from within what may well be abrupt, disrupted, and allegorical at first, for poetry also implies a decision and the will to reach a particular pulse and a more abstract use of language. To reach the computing of poetic suspension (as faith, truth and time made active in verse), the first choice is that of a willing or voluntary giving up of prose as simple linguistic flux and medium of opinion and disbelief (hence Coleridge's opposition to Wordsworth on that matter).

When we come to the temporal or rhythmical grounds of Coleridge's symbol, the force of allegory is always felt because language is shown as such, or reveals itself as it takes the risk of being first of all a treatment of immanent "time," that is a tentative rhythmical experiment—not meaningful in the sense that meaning would be stable or defined *a priori* as coming from a separate sphere. As a form of time-meaning, by revolving or gravitating within its own experience, processual "meaning" or "suspension" may not be completely available as "content," and it is not readily understandable as presupposed "meaning." Coleridge's definition of poetry as "suspension of disbelief" is a term that allegorizes the will to become a poet, and expresses, albeit in a biased way, a man's decision to believe in himself as a poet and to believe in poetry because it is better, higher, and weightier than prose and larger than the man he is. Apart from that, interpretation lies in the open, literally "in the process." To think that language contains direct or blunt meaning is a mistake and the basis for the state of "disbelief" that poetry strives to move away from.

When rhythm actually becomes a mode of thinking, "suspension of meaning" weighs upon the ongoing construction of writing and literally balances it. Such constant balancing may involve a moment of contradiction and separation, of slowing down or acceleration, a contemplation or fulgurance, a construction and deconstruction, duplicating language effects. For Coleridge, the maturing process and the dramatic production of thought require verse, just as *poiesis* for Aristotle was a making of action considered as philosophical stance. With rhythmic suspension of meaning, we have a poem, that is to say explicit poetry as a form of writing in rhythm which is opposed to the neglect of rhythm in blunt prose (although sheer bluntness only happens when prose is not "well written"). In other words, poetry keeps weighing on what it effectuates in thought, or on the quality of the thought which it enacts as a form of time and rhythm, and poetry produces thought as an act of equilibrium between form and content, as a balancing of time and history. It therefore takes formal recombinations of forms and meanings to counterbalance the ideas already "given" in philosophy as much as the "known" facts of history.

Paul de Man chose to insist upon the "immaterial" ambiguity shared by allegory and symbol, but what he called Coleridge's ambiguity in distinguishing between symbol and allegory expresses the doubling up of philosophy by poetry, of history by prophecy, or rather the denser division of historical prose by the judgment, weighing and revelation of verse. "Suspending" implies "doubling up," and "extracting value," just as Man implies the Ghost, and vice versa. Poetry implies allegory just as much as abstract spectrality implies living plenitude, in a movement adverse to Godwin's rational pessimism. De Man's deconstructive scepticism is not in a better position to understand Coleridge's idea of poetry.

In his essay, de Man mentions the fact that Coleridge gave a definition of allegory in which allegory "convey[s], while in disguise, either moral qualities or conceptions of the mind that are not in themselves the object of the senses" (Coleridge, *Miscellaneous Criticism* 30, qtd. in de Man 192). This definition is again another modification of *Poetics* 1451b. Allegorical disguise is "more abstract" and "more philosophical" than history (as "objects of the senses"). De Man does not notice that fact, nor the implied allusion to Aristotle. If he had, he would have gained access to the fact that allegory is here nothing else but Aristotelian *poiesis*. Allegory is therefore not empirical; it is more hidden and suspensive than detailed concrete facts or factual elements in history or in immediate sense perception. In other words, allegory concentrates *poiesis* by dissociating *poiesis* once again from history; it is philosophical in the specific sense of the "suspension" or "disguise" it involves, as well as in the turning away from common sense and senses. Disguise is the costume of an actor in a drama. With allegory, a dramatic actor or *hypocrites* becomes central in the making of poetry as philosophy.

VERSE PHILOSOPHY

The abstract form or mask that may convey qualities or conceptions of the mind that cannot be directly conveyed implies a dramatic language. Verse is precisely such a dramatic language. Being abstract, allegory takes the risk of dissociating form and meaning, but it does so because it triggers a dialectical moment in its formal-rhythmical function. It is "not meaning" as such, it is only becoming a form, or a becoming of form that the poet's will leads to meaning through the dialogue between form and content. Verse is a dramatic tool for the crisis which makes it constitutive of thought. In the same way, rhythm is the more than linguistic intermediary to the making of linguistic (and moral) experience; it is the critical tension that allows the form. It is subsidiary and essential *at the same time*, both *indirect*, *oblique* and *to the point*. Although it is not central in Aristotelian *poiesis*, verse has a decisive function in Coleridge. It is the disguise of the willing actors whose dialogue cannot but confront form, time and meaning in the construction

of man and history. This position is also exactly the same as that which was specified in the famous and often misunderstood definition of "the secondary imagination" (imagination in Coleridge is twice what it is, literally reduplicating itself in two spheres). Decisive will and its actions in time are required to recreate things that were initially created by the far higher and immensely more abstract (and for that matter provokingly masked and "ultra-allegorical") will of God: "The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, and dissipates, in order to recreate ..." (*Biographia Literaria* 1: 304).

Verse, like Coleridge's secondary imagination, is not the "original" power, but it does recreate itself as a power through its own process of ruptures and reconstructions. The point of encounter and dialogue between the connecting symbol and the disrupting allegory is not what de Man called an "ambiguity" resulting from the lack of definition of an idea without substance or beyond the realm of experience. The common point lies in the experience of verse and poetry, considered as a critical process from which a positive renewal of ideas and forms emerge. In rhythm, abrupt "allegoric" interruption connects to an ongoing "symbolic" process allowing renewal. In connection with the mystical idea of the "eternal instant," allegory and symbol enter the dialectics of time as the makers-of-times and their variations, with eternal time sheltering the reconstructive process of past, present and future times through actuating rhythm: *prose* when well *written,* or *meaning* when *suspended,* or *dissipation* when it *recreates*.

Allegorical *arsis*, suspensive "abstraction" or "will" as abrupt decision and continued resilience in time may then be considered as the key, or as the first engine of the poetic relation that Coleridge establishes between time and eternity, between the figure of the absolute and the figure of relativity, and for that matter, between the two figures of truth and history. Allegory is the engine of philosophy within poetry, and the reason why verse as poetic suspension suspends and interrupts skeptical disbelief. However, it must also be borne in mind that belief is also a rhythmical suspension which applies to historical forms of disbelief and erases these forms. Poetry is not outside immanent prose considered as the language of doubts and questions. If we concentrate the idea even more, we come to understand that belief is nothing but the ongoing collection of various ways of making time. Belief is nothing *but disbelief made rhythmical*, syncopated and interruptive, the pulse of its own game and play, the inner dialogue within *dis-belief* itself: the question within the question, or the phantom in every question: pure uncertainty—or transcendental ignorance.

As a man of his time, Coleridge knew that the risk of disbelief appears inside belief itself, in sense evidence and in the delusion of the ill-named obvious, in the negative dialectics of sentimental assent, in the pulse of

allegories that can only ground themselves in the fact that they are just moments in time. Coleridge attempted to express the poetic tension present within the idea of symbolic unity or *thesis* because this tension precisely exists in man's humiliating experience of history. His career shows that he remained a poet in the making, as much as a poet of the Maker, a constructivist who played with the wealth and weight of his own uncertainties and indecisions, with hesitations regarding what belief and religion really meant in his own downgraded time.

Through his search for poetic justness, he defined poetry as a philosophical *composition*, that is to say, as a discourse which manages "for the moment" to be suspended philosophy, and to place abstract thought, *abstract rhythmical thought* at the source of man's experience of history. It was indeed ambitious to define man through and through as a poet-philosopher, to make experience emerge from within the transcendental rhythms of Time-meaning, with verse and poetry regulating, weighing and dynamically balancing the logic that was "meant" to become efficient (i.e. *true*) in rhythmic life as it weighs and judges historical times. However, such a project is typical of modernity, with its doubts and indecisions, its keen sense of spiritual and existential limits. Coleridge, in his own weight and wealth, brings us back to the *schweben* or *oscillation* of imagination in Fichte, and to the sense of *Unendlichkeit*, unendingness, to the critical nature and constant reopening of the fragile process of time-making.

Allegory involves a definition of imagination that may act as a guarantee against the mystification of any stable unity applied to the "form-idea" complex. Nothing is stable, nothing is final; necessity must be constructed as the language we share. A poetic composition is a position of language that keeps doubling itself up as verse. In its constructive and rhythmical sense, as a risk, allegory is an "episode," *on the side of disruption* and ongoing dialogues. It does not conform to the flux of the so-called and "epoch-forming" symbolic identity. No symbol is final or total, but a symbol is always "transcendentally meant." The sense of necessity implies the poetics of suspension and nonresolution, the discovery and balancing of the ideas of philosophy by poetry, the crisis of language and meaning that comes from within the suspensions of rhythm and verse—ways by which phrases and things usually deemed possible in prose unfold contradictions and obstacles that redefine them; and we may perhaps now paraphrase Aristotle and say that *poetry is a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal by striving to reach precisely that which is considered impossible.*

NOTE

1. It would be very fruitful to trace the drama of superlatives and value in *Biographia Literaria*, and especially Coleridge's phrases including "the best."

WORKS CITED

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. D. Ross. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980. Print.
———. *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961. Print.
Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998. Print.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. 1817. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Eds. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. Vol. 7. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985. Print.
———. *Lay Sermons*. 1817. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. R. J. White. Vol. 6. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972. Print.
———. *Miscellaneous Criticism*. Ed. T.M. Raysor. London: Constable and Co., 1936. Print.
———. *The Statesman's Manual*. 1816. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. R. J. White. Vol. 6. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972. Print.
de Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983. Print.
Derrida, Jacques. *Mémoires: for Paul de Man*. Trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, and Eduardo Cadava. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. Print.
Godwin, William. *Caleb Williams*. 1794. Ed. M. Hindle. New York: Penguin Classics, 1988. Print.
———. *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*. 1798. Ed. Isaac Kramnick. New York: Penguin Classics, 1985. Print.
———. *Of History and Romance*. 1797. *Caleb Williams*. Ed. M. Hindle. New York: Penguin Classics, 1988. 359–73. Print.
Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, and Jean-Luc Nancy. *L'absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*. Paris: Seuil, 1978. Print.
Roe, Nicholas. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. Print.
Schlegel, Friedrich. *"Lucinde" and the Fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1971. Print.
Wordsworth, William. Preface. *Lyrical Ballads*. 1800. Eds. N. Roe, R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. 286–314. Print.

3 "Ghostly Language"

Spectral Presences and Subjectivity in Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* Poems

Mark Sandy

> The music bursteth into second life;
> The notes luxuriate, every stone is kissed
> By sound, or ghost of sound …
>
> William Wordsworth, Sonnet XXXIV

> And of ourselves and of our origins,
> In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.
>
> Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West"

Wordsworth's modification of "sound" to the "ghost of sound" captures the elusive, yet somehow palpable, effects of twilit music (*Sonnets* 437). Wordsworth's phrase might seem commonplace enough, but its ghostly manifestation of a sound that is barely perceptible as sound at all speaks tellingly to Romanticism's spectral presences in the past, present, and future. "Romanticism," as Marc Redfield observes, "marks the historical moment of spectrality" that allegorizes its own moment of haunting and all those subsequent hauntings of futurity (271–73). These spectral or ghostly presences, as Wordsworth realizes through the synesthetic touch of music in Sonnet XXXIV, are as intangible as they are persistent, as strange as they are intimate, as possible as they are impossible. This sense of the ghost as a mere echo or repetition of nothing (a virtual nonsound or nonentity) voices the conditionality of a ghost; an insubstantial yet definite form, a phantasmal figure that gestures (with empty sleeves) toward its nonexistent, but very real persistent presence in the past, present, and future moment of its own haunting.

"HAUNTED BY MEANING": ROMANTICISM, WORDSWORTH, AND SPECTERS

Romanticism as a haunted and haunting presence becomes, as Paul de Man comments on the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, "the ghostly memory of mourned absences" (259). Certainly, Friedrich Nietzsche (one specter who haunts de Man's critical work)[1] is attuned to the familiarity and unfamiliarity

of these haunted and haunting "mourned absences" when he observes that in the moment: "We greatly transform ourselves, those friends of ours who have not been transformed become ghosts of our past: their voice comes across to us like the voice of a shade" (274). Implicit in Nietzsche's aphoristic comment on "friends as ghosts" is a sense of the self perturbed by the "voice" of its spectral other; a haunting sense of otherness that, anticipating a Freudian notion of the uncanny (*unheimlich*), renders the subject both estranged from itself and unhoused. On this account we can conceive of the language and subjectivity of Romanticism, in relation to Jacques Derrida's writing on "Force and Signification," as the "architecture of an uninhabited or deserted city" populated only by ghosts: "A city no longer inhabited, not simply left behind, but haunted by meaning and culture. The state of being haunted, which keeps the city from returning to nature, is perhaps the general mode of the presence or absence of the thing itself in pure language" (5). Post-Romantic writing about subjectivity is unsettled by a dual sense of Romanticism as a haunted site and the source of numerous subsequent hauntings. The presence of these Romantic hauntings is felt through the post-Romantic poetry of Wallace Stevens. Spectral presences echo in those "keener sounds" of Stevens's "ghostly demarcations" where the "origins" of "ourselves" are traced back to Romantic "fragrant portals, dimly starred" (111).[2] The closing movement of Stevens's "The Idea of Order at Key West" is haunted in two distinct but interrelated ways (one verbal or textual, the other conceptual) that illuminate, more generally, my chapter's following account of spectral presences and subjectivity in Wordsworth's poetry. Firstly, whether through deliberate or accidental echo, haunting occurs as a conscious or unconscious literary allusion so that Stevens's "fragrant portals" are amplified and disturbed by the verbal specter of Keats's "magic casements" (69, 371).[3] Secondly, Stevens's post-Romantic attempt to trace out the "origins" of our subjectivity turns out to be haunted by the spectral presences of Romanticism's own anxious fascination with a fragile interiority, often itself alert to the potential vacuity of the self. For Stevens, like other post-Romantic writers and thinkers, the Romantic is a necessary specter that should never have been, but always remains.

Wordsworth's specters and the ghostly qualities of his own poetry have not gone unnoticed. Geoffrey Hartman's seminal account of *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* notes the "feeling of ghostliness" (133) that haunts Wordsworth's poetics of the ordinary. With a focus on social concern and commodities, David Simpson offers a reading, refracted through Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, of Wordsworth's poetry and "the ghostliness of things" (143–73). Reconceived through psychoanalysis and a post-Derridean literary theory, Mary Jacobus understands Wordsworth and the Romantic lyric as encountering the import, weight (emotional, psychic, or physical), and gravitation of those things real and spectral, sensible and insensible, material and immaterial. For Jacobus, the Wordsworthian lyric recognizes that "Even breathing becomes breathing toward death, just as the gift of a

poem becomes a form of conversing with the dead" (*Romantic Things* 3).[4] Wordsworth emerges as an existential poet of encounters with mourning, loss, grief, and the limitations of our fragile and spectral existences.

"A WORD, GHOST-LIKE, SURVIVES": *SALISBURY PLAIN* AND SPECTRAL VOICES

These existential encounters, ghostly exchanges, and spectral presences populate Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* poems. Originally composed by Wordsworth in 1793, *Salisbury Plain* was published in one version as "The Female Vagrant" in 1798 and subsequently revised as "Guilt and Sorrow; or, Incidents upon Salisbury Plain" in 1842.[5] "Human grief oppressed" (*Salisbury Plain* 30, 269)[6] formed the subject of material (first conceived of as "A Night on Salisbury Plain," then *Salisbury Plain*, and later "Adventures on Salisbury Plain"), which Wordsworth revisited several times, although never brought to a satisfactory artistic resolution, over the course of his poetic career. This composition and recomposition constitute in themselves a kind of textual haunting. Providing the kernel to these haunted narratives is a ghostly male form (barely a physical semblance of his former self), who walks the earth, condemned by his crime and guilt, as the already dead specter he is and will become.[7]

Through a "ghostly language" (*Prelude* II: 327) of fear and wonder, of primordial spectral presences and voices, Wordsworth's poetic vision in *Salisbury Plain* oscillates between nature's compensatory power and unsympathetic indifference to grief. Wordsworth's adoption of Spenserian stanzas and its attendant genre of romance heighten this tension between tragic disclosure and fictional consolation in *Salisbury Plain*, where the reader detects an uneasy relation between the poem's romance form and its subject matter. This tension can be construed, in Nietzsche's terms, as the haunting of the Apollonian dream of romance by a Dionysian tragic reality (Rajan *Dark Interpreter*). As Wordsworth knew the romance genre had a reputation for courting aesthetic, political, and social controversy, as well as exploring the uneasy relation between the real and spectral; or, in Stuart Curran's words, "the probable and the improbable" (132). Wordsworth's early attempt to write romance (at a time of enormous personal upheaval and with a pressing awareness of harsh social realities) taxed a genre already acquainted with the complex dynamic between history and imaginative invention.[8]

Lost in a storm (a metaphor for natural, social, spiritual, and psychic disorder) without hope, bearings, shelter or a home, Wordsworth's traveller, in *Salisbury Plain*, is both a haunted and haunting figure subject to the merciless elements and spectral presences (whether supernatural or superstitious forces) of the vastness of Salisbury Plain that threaten to fracture his subjectivity:

> The troubled west was red with stormy fire,
> O'er Sarum's plain the traveller with a sigh

> Measured each painful step, the distant spire
> That fixed at every turn his backward eye
> Was lost, tho' still he turned, in the blank sky.
> By thirst and hunger pressed he gazed around
> And scarce could any trace of man descry,
> Save wastes of corn that stretched without a bound,
> But where the sower dwelt was nowhere to be found. (stanza 5)

Wordsworth's traveller offers a prototype to the spectral death-in-life figures of Lucy Gray and the Discharged Soldier, whose fragile subjectivities materialize and dematerialize in and out of existence on the periphery of our perception (Sandy, "Circulation of Grief" 250–52).[9] Here Wordsworth's narrator focuses on the traveller's own disintegrating subjectivity and alienated condition amid the "vacant" scene overlooked by a "blank sky," as well as his desperate revenant-like impulse to return home; even if that home is irretrievably lost to him and he is irrevocably damned by his past actions. The narrator's portrayal of the sheer blankness without "any trace of man descry," repeatedly, reminds the traveller there is no sign of a "homeward shepherd" (6, 50), or humble abode "where the sower dwelt" (5, 45), or even shelter of the gypsy's "straw-built home" (13, 112), by which to be comforted. The exhausted traveller's misfortune not to stumble across a hidden "cottage whither his tired feet might turn" (7, 57) leaves him exposed to the infernal eastern "stormy fire" (5, 37) and an obdurate nature that painfully points to his "unhouzed" (1, 1) condition. By contrast to Wordsworth's traveller, even the crows "in blackening eddies" are "homeward borne" (7, 58) and the bustard is presented as a "shy tenant" (8, 69) of its environs. The traveller's "unhouzed" state registers a physical loss of dwelling, security, ownership, as well as an existential dread about no longer belonging to those conventional social or religious orders that guarantee psychic or spiritual comfort and physical safety.

From the moment that Wordsworth's traveller lost his bearings in the storm and the cardinal point of Salisbury Cathedral (whose "distant spire / That fixed at every turn his backward eye / Was lost" [5, 38–40]), he became physically vulnerable to the elements and mentally susceptible to spectral presences and the pagan world of superstition:

> The Sun unheeded sunk, while on a mound
> He stands beholding with astonished gaze,
> Frequent upon the deep entrenched ground,
> Strange marks of mighty arms of former days,
> Then looking up at distance surveys
> What seems an antique castle spreading wide.
> … while to those walls he hied
> A voice as from a tomb in hollow accents cried … (9, 72–78; 80–81)

This pre-Christian world of druidic ritual and human sacrifice is represented by both the "antique castle" of Stonehenge (accidentally stumbled upon by the traveller) and the faceless and formless "voice" (12, 100) which, through a "ghostly language," tells of "priests and spectres grim and idols dire" (11, 93). This spectral voice, petrifying the traveller, arose "as from a tomb in hollow accents" to speak of, and from, the dead of this place that date back to and beyond Heathen times. These ghostly tales of the dead (and of the grief of those who outlive them) find expression in the fragmentary narratives of their departed presences told by a disembodied spectral voice that, like those of whom it tells, is anchored to this specific site. To borrow Nietzsche's phrase this "voice of a shade," tethered to this abandoned place, finds an affinity with Derrida's "state of being haunted" and as such is suggestive about the machinations of Wordsworth's "ghostly language." Wordsworth's "ghostly language" conjures up a specter of a forgotten past only to obliterate its original form in the moment of its projected future as a spectral presence. Like any haunting, Wordsworth's "ghostly language" relies upon a future projected anti-self or imagined other that "will be my second self when I am gone" (*Michael* 39).

In this sense, the retelling and reshaping of the specific details of a particular historic episode perform a kind of erasure in which the indecipherable "Strange marks … of former days" (*Salisbury Plain* 9, 76) find meaning not in their original sense, but in the stories and superstitions that grow up around them (as in the cases of Lucy Gray and Martha Ray) and are passed down as part of a communal "ghostly memory of mourned absences" from generation to generation. The process of transmitting these translations or mistranslations of the significance of these "Strange marks" point toward those, inevitable, difficulties of partial perspectives, understandings, and misunderstandings vital to Wordsworth's pastoral poems (including *The Ruined Cottage*, "The Thorn," and *Michael*) and their treatment of loss, grief, and ghostly memory.

In *Salisbury Plain*, a "ghostly language" of personal and communal narratives converges on the single geographic feature of Salisbury Plain. In the 1805 version of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's earliest impressions of Salisbury Plain and Stonehenge testify to his own sense of its ancient monuments, druidic ritual, and geography as belonging to "both worlds, the living and the dead" (XII: 336). The primordial presence of Stonehenge and its environs in *Salisbury Plain*, at least according to one narrative point of view, has its own ghostly voice and tale to tell. Although whether the haunting voice, which speaks of the dead and Salisbury Plain's pagan past, is the work of a transcendent force, or the superstitious susceptibility of the narrator, or the debilitated subjectivity of the traveller remains indeterminate within the fractured frames of Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain*:

> 'Twas dark and waste as ocean's shipless flood
> Roaring with storms beneath night's starless gloom.

.....
No transient meteor burst upon his sight
Nor taper glimmered dim from sick man's room.
Along the moor no line of mournful light
From lamp of lonely toll-gate streamed athwart the night.
(13, 109–10; 113–16)

Whatever the source of this "ghostly language" heard by the traveller, it only reminds him of his past losses and current physical and psychic vulnerability adrift and unable to navigate the plain's "dark and waste as ocean's shipless flood" in the storm's "starless gloom." This extended metaphor is haunted by Wordsworth's substitutions, in other versions of this poem, for the traveller with a Sailor returned from war. That the traveller, in this early version of the poem, is utterly bereft of any sign of human dwelling or social contact is further symbolized by the absence even of "a mournful light / From lamp of lonely toll-gate." The absent-presence of the "mournful" lamp-light poignantly resonates with the dimly lit "sick man's room" in the previous line and the earlier description of the momentary illumination of the "lightning" as "abortive" (12, 107). Through a culmination of these funereal adjectives across stanzas 12 and 13, Wordsworth plays to the existential predicament of the traveller, who comes to question his right to a human dwelling and even whether (hinting at his ever-increasingly ghostly condition) he is worthy of a place amid the community of the living at all. Consequently, Wordsworth's traveller is driven as a vacant self "With flight unwilled, / Worn out and wasted, wishing the repose / Of death" (14, 119–21).

This "wasted," spectral, figure of the traveller (who rendered as a Sailor and war veteran in Wordsworth's alternative versions) is closer in type to the Discharged Soldier. Appropriately, Wordsworth's traveller finds shelter from the tempest's "night-terrors" (14, 124) in the most inhospitable of places rife with superstition (as the bestowing of the name suggests), where "no human being could remain / And now the walls are named the dead house of the plain" (14, 125–26). There the traveller encounters a "female wanderer" (16, 138)—later recast by Wordsworth in "The Female Vagrant"—who has her own story of familial decline, personal tragedy, lost love, and homelessness to relate. Her manner of narration is characterized—recalling the poem's earlier funereal imagery—as one of a "mourner [who] thus her artless story told" (26, 227). Her narrative holds up a mirror to the traveller's own experience of "unhouzed" exposure to the natural elements in the storm.[10] Like the traveller, the wanderer derives little consolation from nature for her "loss, which rolling suns shall ne'er restore" (25, 223). In this version of nocturnal happenings in *Salisbury Plain*, the "dead house" provides a point of convergence for the ghostly traveller's implicit, third person, tale of destitution and the grief-stricken wanderer's explicit, first person, story of domestic decline, the tragic involvement of her husband and their

children in the war in the Americas and, after their deaths, forced vagrancy on her return to Britain. In their complementary, although very different, narrative modes neither tale independently offers any consolation for the loss they describe. But the uncanny doubling that exists between the respective subjects and themes of their tales echoes the silent sympathy that passes between the male traveller and female wanderer. Conversing in a "ghostly language" of their own, the male traveller and female wanderer become the imagined other or "second self" of one another's ghost stories. This spectral doubling evokes and obliterates past horrors, transforming these dual tales of ruin through a pivotal shift in focus away from the "weary night / So ruinous [to some] far other scene to view" (38, 334–35).

This spectral and sympathetic doubling of these narratives of loss is anticipated by the arcane and mystic affinities that exist between the geographic feature of the Spital and Stonehenge. Echoing the traveller's terrifying and disturbing encounter with Stonehenge, the female wanderer reveals her own apprehension and trepidation (in part fuelled by superstition) when she first approached the Spital, for "of that ruin she had heard a tale / That might with a child's fears the stoutest heart assail" (16, 143–44). Her first reaction of "sudden dread" (16, 142) and suspicion of the traveller is governed by those "tales of the lone Spital she had learned" (18, 154), but these anxieties soon give way to a recognition of a "greeting kind" (18,159) and human connection between them; bound as they are by grief and their isolate wanderings on the vast wastes of "Sarum's plain" (5, 38). Within their ghostly exchange of tales—as "they conversed of that desert ground" (18, 160)—we hear both snatches of those superstitious tales about the Spital and further ghostly stories connected with Stonehenge relayed by the wanderer from her chance meeting with an "old" man (19, 170). Through these retellings of stories framed within stories, we are also permitted to glimpse a transformative "pleasing light" (22, 190)—qualitatively distinct from the lightning's "abortive beam" (12, 106) or the moon's "sickly glare" (14, 119)—that has been absent until this point in *Salisbury Plain*.

"THE GHOST OF A FORGOTTEN FORM": *SALISBURY PLAIN* AND HAUNTED ROMANCE

This change in the quality of light translates the lurid and nightmarish specters of the plain into benign "Long bearded forms with wands uplifted" (22, 191) whose rituals on the "mystic plain" usher in the quiet of night as a "prelude of sweet sounds" (22, 196–97). A similar "pleasant sound" reoccurs in *The Prelude* (1805, XII: 353), when Wordsworth, recollecting wandering on Salisbury Plain, recounts the "antiquarian's dream" of "bearded Teachers, with white wands / Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky" (XII: 348–50). Such sounds may speak to the potentially restorative powers of the "ghostly language of the ancient earth" (*The Prelude* II: 328).

This mystical and symbolic ushering in of the muted "breath of night" (*Salisbury Plain* 22, 192) provides a barometer for the break in the weather on the plain—when "the churlish storms relent" with "dying wind" (23, 199–200)—and gauges the temperament of the Spital's interior scene marked by the empathetic silence (a hopeful sign that some residual subjectivity remains intact) of the traveller as the sole confidante to the wanderer's "sad tale" (39, 351) of grief.

Wordsworth's symbolic transition from the turbulent storm to becalmed dawn,[11] as well as the described change in, and transformative quality of, the moonlight is suggestive of *Salisbury Plain*'s own haunting by the magical powers of romance. This transformation intimates the poem's crucial and imaginative transition under the sympathetic direction of the traveller to cast our eyes upon a less "ruinous far other scene" (38, 335). Daybreak reveals to the traveller and wanderer, now making their way together after taking leave of the Spital, a correspondingly "pleasant scene" (46, 407) of a valley that proffers the comfortable shelter and hospitality of a cottage-dwelling with "homely bread" (47, 420) and fresh milk in abundance:

> But now from a hill summit down they look
> Where through a narrow valley's pleasant scene
> A wreath of vapour tracked a winding brook
> Babbling through groves and lawns and meads of green. (46, 406–09)

Against the odds, the pastoral realm of romance seems to have successfully fended off a nightmarish world of darker realities. This positive movement and potential resolution within *Salisbury Plain* works itself out through a pattern of nature's calming and restorative powers that Wordsworth had tentatively sketched nearly seven years before its composition in "Written in Very Early Youth."[12] Wordsworth's sonnet traces a similar trajectory present in *Salisbury Plain* from the blankness of nature's night sky to a realization of nature's homely, comforting, sustaining, and rejuvenating power:

> Dark is the ground; a slumber seems to steal
> O'er vale, and mountain, and the starless sky.
> Now, in this blank of things, a harmony,
> Home-felt, and home-created, comes to heal
> That grief for which the sense still supply
> Fresh food; for only then, when memory
> Is hushed, am I at rest. (5–11)[13]

In *Salisbury Plain*, Wordsworth's symbolic movement from night to day, from tempest to calm, whether intentionally or not, echoes this earlier sonnet. Wordsworth, as Kurt Fosso notes, envisions in *Salisbury Plain* his social outcasts as a version of Spenser's errant knight and his lady who, finally, become the rightful inheritors of a spiritual and material wholesome land

and community of plenty.[14] But this cornucopia of reintegration into society and domestic harmony is unsettled by the very Spenserian and Miltonic allusions upon which it is founded. The shadowy world of socio-political reality continues to haunt even the most brilliant bowers of bliss.

In this respect, the closing sequence of Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* provides an instance of textual haunting that is manifest through deliberate or accidental evocations of those spectral presences of Spenser and Milton. Even before the narrator's fond farewell to this "friendless hope-forsaken pair" (47, 415) and his lengthy discourse on the evils and injustices of society, Wordsworth's use of romance motif and Miltonic allusion quietly undermines any possible vision of serenity or security for the traveller and wanderer. As the world of romance works its transformative magic through the "pleasing light" of "clear moons" (22, 190), in the pivotal stanza of *Salisbury Plain*, Wordsworth's verbal choices in his description of how "the moon *beguiles* / And *charmed* for many a league the hoary desert" (*emphasis added*, 22, 198) again reminds us of the hoodwinking capacity of Spenserian romance, where those beguiling paradisal bowers often turn out to be no more than a conjuror's trickery; an Apollonian dream disturbed by the specter of Dionysian reality (Sandy, *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning* 115–30). Equally, an ominous foreboding is suggested by the spectral presence of Milton, who haunts the verbal texture of Wordsworth's depiction of the final scenes of the traveller and wanderer to recall Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's postlapsarian pair, as they gaze eastward, find themselves expelled from Paradise and about to embark upon the trials and tribulations of mortal existence on a "subjected plain" (XII: 640). In contrast to *Paradise Lost*, Wordsworth's "hope-forsaken pair" have already survived their physical and spiritual trials on the plain and this, perhaps, suggests a reversal of Milton's scenario in which the traveller and wanderer are restored to, rather than exiled from, paradise. That the couples in Milton's epic and Wordsworth's romance gaze eastward to the rising sun and not westward (traditionally associated with death) might be cause for cautious optimism.

At first, this optimism seems justified if we read *Salisbury Plain* alongside a passage from the first *Essay upon Epitaphs*, where Wordsworth compares the progression of life from birth to death:

> As, in sailing upon the orb of this Planet, a voyage, towards the regions where the sun sets, conducts gradually to the quarter where we have been accustomed to behold it come forth at its rising; and, in like manner, a voyage towards the east, the birth-place in our imagination of the morning, leads finally to the quarter where the Sun is last seen when he departs from our eyes; so the contemplative Soul, travelling in the direction of mortality, advances to the Country of everlasting Life; and, in like manner, may she continue to explore those cheerful tracts, till she is brought back, for her advantage and benefit to the land of transitory things—of sorrow and tears. (*The Excursion* 305–06)

Wordsworth's analogy between planetary orbits and the journey of the human soul may equate the westward region with the certainty of a spiritual afterlife but, as de Man observes, underlying this system of tropes is the ghostly figure of prosopopoeia which substitutes a mask or face for the absent and deceased name and voice.[15] In spite of the eschatological hope of Wordsworth's image of the sun's westward wanderings, de Man concludes the sun symbolizes nature and knowledge to become "the eye that *reads* the text of the epitaph" (75, *original emphasis*). In this deconstructive turn, Wordsworth's Apollonian figure of the sun mitigates against its own cause for optimism by both silhouetting a transitory Dionysian world "of sorrow and tears" and foregrounding those processes of figuration and disfiguration, which enable the nameless and voiceless deceased to speak through epitaphs; or the restorative and obliterating language of ghosts.

Unfortunately, similar misgivings inform Wordsworth's insistence, toward the close of the narration of *Salisbury Plain*, that even the "pleasant scene" (46, 407)—viewed from a "hill summit" (46, 406) which, like Adam and Eve, they must descend (*Paradise Lost* XII: 606)[16]—is laced through with a "wreath of vapour" (*Salisbury Plain* 46, 408) and intervening "melancholy lowing" (46, 412). Wordsworth's traveller and wanderer may have endured the spiritual and physical test of Salisbury plain, but their grief is far from healed, for we learn that he "had withered young in sorrow's deadly blight" and "her soul [was] for ever widowed of delight" (45, 404–5). These funereal epithets are all the more disturbingly apt in light of Wordsworth's allusions to Milton's description of mankind's expulsion from Eden into a world of transience marked by death as a punishment for their transgression.

As the narrator's focus recedes from the bleak outlook of Wordsworth's hapless couple, the closing lines of *Salisbury Plain* offer both a panoptic and damning indictment of the institutions and principles that have been the cause of societal ills and injustice. Echoing Wordsworth's use of epic and romance motifs, the narrator's own tirade against social injustices translates death as a spiritual and existential problem into a social reality by ascribing (couched as a rhetorical question) the "iron scourge" of the law with a "voice that breathes despair, to death's tremendous verge?" (58, 519, 522). Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* is haunted by shadowy historical and social realities, which reassert themselves in the main narrative as a series of spectral presences.

This troubling fit between Wordsworth's choice of poetic genre and sociopolitical subject has been interpreted as an implicit criticism of the Godwinian social vision advocated by the narrator, in which those limitations of political idealism are thrown into relief by the inability of the romance form to accommodate harsh social and political realities (Fosso 84–85). This productive tension can also be usefully reconfigured in relation to Wordsworth's treatment of spectral presences. Operating similarly to the shared, but distinct, ghostly tales of Wordsworth's traveller and wanderer, the dual modes of romance and social critique present in *Salisbury Plain*

resonate (as spectral doubles) with one another so that romance's tragic disclosure of our existential condition can be translated into the suffering of the masses at the hands of an oppressively unjust society. Even the most hallucinatory and ghostly episodes of the traveller's "unhouzed" and alienated state, in *Salisbury Plain*, can be allegorized, as the poem's Spenserian form invites, in terms of the government's unpopular oppressive policies on the home-front and its foreign policy's commitment to a war with France (Jacobus *Tradition and Experiment*, 151–52).

Even if it is at the risk of the destruction of those who are oppressed, *Salisbury Plain*'s final lines serve as a clarion call for revolutionary action, which will ensure that "not a trace / Be left on earth of Superstition's reign, / Save that eternal pile which frowns on Sarum's plain" (61, 547–49). Wordsworth's phrasing, inextricably, implicates those earlier spectral and hallucinatory experiences (born, in part, from superstitious rumors) of the traveller with the political and social tyranny of "Superstition's reign" alluded to here. Wordsworth's imaginative endeavor to bind together the world of romance with political protest ends without resolution or consolation. Wordsworth's Stonehenge belongs as much to the realm of druidic enchantment and romance as it represents the social and political complacency that permitted Sarum to become a rotten borough without political representation (Fosso 85; Janowitz 104; Wiley, 32). We are left with a landscape dominated by the "eternal pile" of Stonehenge which is itself both a ruin and, by its association with superstition, at some level, ruinous.

Ruined and ruinous forms emblematize the incomplete poetic structure of *Salisbury Plain*; its broken narrative frames, and ghostly tales told of ruins, simultaneously, constitute and resist Wordsworth's attempts to cast and recast the *Salisbury Plain* material as, essentially, a political meditation on the causation of suffering. That the 1842 version, "Guilt and Sorrow," concludes with the very different broken form of the Sailor turned murderer on a gibbet, signals how integral to the *Salisbury Plain* poems are Wordsworth's social concerns about the corruption of society's institutions and how they instigate the perpetration of crime. As in the original conception of *Salisbury Plain*, the revised narrator's perspective on suffering still shows traces of Wordsworth's earlier overly didactic, distant, and objective pronouncement on society and its ills. This detached outward looking gaze of Wordsworth's narrator of "Guilt and Sorrow" is much in evidence as the reader is invited "when into storm the evening sky is wrought, / Upon his [the Sailor's] swinging corse an eye [to] glance, / And drop, as he once dropped, in a miserable trance" (74, 665–66). Admittedly, there is some invitation to empathy with the "miserable" plight of Wordsworth's Sailor, but the glancing "eye" is drawn to the externalities of the "swinging corse." The Sailor's body devoid of subjectivity is caught in a "miserable trance"; a symbol and reality of the deathly haunted and haunting specter he has always been and is always becoming.

Those specters of Wordsworth's hung murderer or lost traveller and female vagrant remain as persistent, though banished, presences whether as the victims of social injustice or the residue of the ghostly stories that belong to the realm of "Superstition's reign." Paradoxically, the "ghostly language" of Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* both restores and obliterates the original moment of haunting to ensure those future occurrences of haunting. As a consequence Wordsworth's damning pronouncement on "Superstition's reign" (and its associated corrupt social institutions) as anachronistic inadvertently runs the risk of legitimizing the antiquated systems that he despised. Wordsworth's spectral presences of superstition and social corruption are never truly vanquished: their ghosts and specters return to haunt any new political, social, or religious order; gesturing back toward the arcane systems that originally legitimated their own ghostly presences.[17] Romanticism is one such new order that constitutes its own "ghostly memory of mourned absences" and the haunted presence of its own future absence. These Romantic specters are the allusive and elusive "ghost of sound" within Romanticism itself and heard in those subtle, yet perceptible, Romantic echoes forever present in the theory and practice of post-Romanticism.

NOTES

1. For an account of the specters that haunt De Manian deconstruction, see Rajan, "Displacing Post-Structuralism."
2. Stevens quoted from *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poems* referenced here.
3. Keats's poetry quoted from Jack Stillinger's *The Poems of John Keats* referenced here.
4. Jacobus's sense of Wordsworth's death-orientated poetics speaks to similar concerns in two other recent studies. See Fosso and Fry.
5. For a full account of Wordsworth's revisions of this work and its publication history, see Welsford.
6. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations from Wordsworth's poetry will be from Stephen Gill's edition of *The Major Works* referenced here.
7. Heidi Thomson notes that Wordsworth's central character, in "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" embodies an extreme "consciousness of loss" so that, figuratively speaking, "He dies before he dies" (9).
8. For a useful discussion of the paradoxical nature of the "politics of romance" in relation to Wordsworth, see Duff 44–53.
9. For an alternative (new-)historicist reading in which "Wordsworth allows the Discharged Soldier to speak for himself" (52), see Murray 35–52.
10. Compare with Thomson's sense that in later versions of the poem these differing viewpoints "complement and mirror each other, their absent spouses are ghosts of remembrance in their interaction with each other" (17–18).
11. Thomson identifies this as the "perfect storm" of possible religious redemption through the words of the Presbyterian preacher, Hubert Stogdon (9).
12. Sarker dates this poem as early as 1786 (30).

13. Wordsworth's sonnet quoted from *Sonnets of William Wordsworth* referenced here.
14. Fosso identifies Wordsworth's traveller and female vagrant with the Red Cross Knight and Una from book one of Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* to suggest that they move from a state of "unaccommodated isolation" to "what Anne Janowitz calls 'moments of community'" (82).
15. De Man comments that through "prosopopoeia … one begins to perceive a world of potential ghosts" (qtd. in Simpson, 162).
16. Milton quoted from Douglas Bush's edition of *The Portable Milton* referenced here.
17. For an illuminating account of "the return of the ghost" (177) in Freud, Heidegger, and Derrida, see Meager.

WORKS CITED

Curran, Stuart. *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.

De Man, Paul. *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1984. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. "Force and Signification." *Writing and Difference*. 1978. Trans. and intro. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

Duff, David. *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Print.

Fosso, Kurt. *Buried Communities: Wordsworth and the Bonds of Mourning*. Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2004. Print.

Fry, Paul H. *Wordsworth and the Poetry of What We Are*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2008. Print.

Hartman, Geoffrey H. *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*. Fore. Donald G. Marshall. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987. Print.

Jacobus, Mary. *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2012. Print.

———. *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's* Lyrical Ballads *(1798)*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976. Print.

Janowitz, Anne. *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. Print.

Keats, John. *Poems of John Keats*. Ed. Jack Stillinger. 1978. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1979. Print.

Meager, David. "The Uncanniness of Spectrality." *Mosaic* 44 (2011): 177–93. Print.

Milton, John. *The Portable Milton*. Ed. Douglas Bush. Harmondsworth: Viking-Penguin, 1977. Print.

Murray, Chris. "Discharged Soldiery: Wordsworth, Cobbett, and Military Corruption in the 1790s." *Essays in Romanticism* 21.1 (2014): 35–52. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. 1878. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale and intro. Richard Schact. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.

Rajan, Tilottama. *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1980. Print.

———. "Displacing Post-Structuralism: Romantic Studies after Paul de Man." *Studies in Romanticism* 24.4 (Winter 1985): 451–74. Print.

Redfield, Mark. "Spectral Romanticisms." *European Romantic Review* 9.2 (1998): 271–73. Print.

Sandy, Mark. *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning*. Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. Print.

———. "Wordsworth and the Circulation of Grief," *Essays in Criticism* 62.3 (2012): 248–64. Print.

Sarker, Sunil Karmer. *Wordsworth Companion*. Vol 2. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003. Print.

Simpson, David. *Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern*: *The Poetics of Modernity.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Stevens, Wallace. "The Idea of Order at Key West." *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poems*. 1984. London: Faber, 2008. Print.

Thomson, Heidi. "A Perfect Storm: The Nature of Consciousness on Salisbury Plain." *Grasmere 2013*, Penrith: Humanities E-books (2013): 8–27. Print.

Welsford, Enid. *Salisbury Plain: A Study in the Development of Wordsworth's Mind and Art*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1966. Print.

Wiley, Michael. *Romantic Geography; Wordsworth and Anglo-European Spaces*. New York: St. Martin's, 1998. Print.

Wordsworth, William. *The Excursion*. Eds. Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2007. Print.

———. "Guilt and Sorrow." *The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth: Authorised Edition*. London: Moxon, 1869. Print.

———. *Sonnets of William Wordsworth. Collected in One Volume*. London: Moxon, 1838. Print.

———. *William Wordsworth: The Major Works* 1984. Ed. Stephen Gill. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

4 Thinking without Being and Acts of Poetry in Shelley

Arkady Plotnitsky

INTRODUCTION: ROMANTICISM AND SHELLEY BETWEEN AND BEYOND PLATONISM AND SKEPTICISM

"Platonism is the big question," Alain Badiou says in defining his conception of ontology, by which he understands the way in which Being is "embodied in thought" (93). This embodiment in thought is, he qualifies, not the same as existence, unless it is the existence of that which is decided upon by thought bound to Being: "When you decide upon what exists you bind yourself to Being" (57). This essay aims to ask the question of Platonism and (they are indissociable) the question of Being via Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry. It also aims to ask this question as the question of "the beyond of Platonism." One might counter that this is how the question of Platonism has always been asked. This may be true. However, Shelley's poetry offers or in any event invites a different conception of the beyond of Platonism than those found in previous arguments concerning Platonism.

Badiou's Platonism, which is a Platonism of the multiple-Being, is arguably the most sophisticated form of Platonism currently available (Badiou 95).[1] However, it is still defined by Badiou in terms of a bind between thought and Being. In this respect, Badiou remains close to Martin Heidegger, from whom he departs in defining his ontology as that of the irreducibly multiple and also in his mathematical (set-theoretical) conception of ontology, an inspiration that he shares with Plato. I shall, however, put the mathematical determination of Badiou's ontology aside.[2] Establishing a bind between thought and Being defines Platonism most generally, extending it from the pre-Socratics, who introduced it (in this broader sense) before Plato. In particular, Parmenides, Socrates' and Plato's key precursor, spoke, on the one hand, of the immutable One, as the only possible conception of Being, and, on the other, of (in one possible translation) "thinking and being [as] the same." The last statement was summoned by both Heidegger and Badiou to support their ontological views, which are Platonist in the general definition just given, although neither Heidegger nor Badiou see Being itself as the immutable One, given their grounding of Being in, respectively, temporality and multiplicity (Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking* 79–102; Badiou 90). Both Heidegger's temporal Being and Badiou's multiple Being may be seen as

moving beyond Platonism. However, by virtue of remaining a form of Being (embodied in thought), neither is a form of "the beyond of Platonism" of the kind that emerges in Shelley's poetry. This beyond of Platonism no longer defined by Being and announcing a "beyond" that is ultimately beyond any conception of beyond-ness that we can form, because it is beyond any conception that we can possibly form. The latter qualification is crucial because it ensures that this "beyond" of Platonism does not return to the unperceived "within" of Platonism. This type of return, as Jacques Derrida argued, often accompanies attempted breaks from Platonism or metaphysics in general, especially when these attempts are accomplished by an uncritical reversal, which leaves the metaphysical base of the initial configuration untouched (e.g. Derrida, *Dissemination* 41–42). "Metaphysics" refers here to the set of principles or structures that ultimately grounds any configurations that could be considered in a given domain, sometimes claimed to be all-encompassing, without being immanent to this domain itself, for example, in the way in which what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence underlines most Western philosophy and in effect makes it Platonism.[3]

The beyond of Platonism in question in this essay implies the irreducibly multiple as well, but, unlike Badiou's Platonism or beyond Platonism of the multiple, it also connects the irreducibly multiple to the irreducibly unthinkable—that which is beyond thought and thus, again, beyond Being. Accordingly, this multiple does not refer to an *ontological* multiple as in Badiou, which would amount to a Platonism of the multiple-Being, but to the irreducible multiplicity of effects (which may be given a surface level ontology) of the beyond-Being or the beyond-thought, which cannot be given an underlying, deeper, ontological architecture, single or multiple.[4] Indeed, it appears (although I can only mention this in passing here) that the irreducibly multiple is the effect of the irreducibly unthinkable. Moving "beyond" Platonism in this way does not mean that one can dispense with ontological thinking or some forms of Platonism, which may, again, be necessary at the level of certain effects of the unthinkable, effects, it follows, without classical causes. It only means that there is the beyond of ontology that, nevertheless, shapes and even defines a given ontology or set of ontologies, or all possible conceptions of ontology that we can form. It is crucial that the unthinkable has a shaping impact on what we can think, know, perceive, and so forth. For these are some among the *effects* of the unthinkable that compel us to infer this unthinkable, for these effects cannot be accounted for otherwise. At stake is a rigorous inference, and not merely an imaginative conception, an imaginative conception of the unimaginable, although this inference requires considerable theoretical imagination.

Platonism is a major question at stake in Shelley's poetry and a long-standing question of Shelleyan scholarship. Shelley's poetry had been associated with Platonism for over a century after his death, mostly with more naïve forms of Platonism, from which the last half a century or so of Shelleyan scholarship has tried to liberate Shelley, beginning with

John Pulos's pioneering *The Deep Truth: A Study of Shelley's Skepticism*. The present essay belongs to this line of thinking concerning Shelley's poetry and thought. However, as against most approaches to Shelley's skepticism, it also aims to place his thought beyond skepticism, even that of David Hume, arguably the most radical form of skepticism and the closest to Shelley. Thus, Shelley's poetry reaches beyond both Platonism and skepticism. Indeed, what has been historically designated as "Platonism" and "skepticism" may be seen as two opposing, but metaphysically complicit, forms of Platonism, if one sees Platonism as defined, along the lines indicated above, by the claim of the bind between thought and Being.[5] By contrast, Shelley's poetry, taking Hume's skepticism (still complicit with Platonism in this general definition) as its point of departure, moves our thought beyond ontological thinking altogether, and thus rigorously beyond Platonism. Shelley's poetry or thought unhinges thought from Being (the hinge that, again, defines Platonism in its greatest generality) and thinks existence beyond thought and Being. It *thinks* this existence as unthinkable, ultimately unthinkable even as unthinkable. Or rather, it relates thought, now without a hinge, in the form of nonrelation, as Maurice Blanchot would have it, to that which cannot be thought, even though and because this unthinkable shapes and even defines that which we can think. I shall call the necessity of considering this irreducible role of the unthinkable in thinking "the Romantic hypothesis." This hypothesis was advanced by Shelley's more skeptical poetry, such as "Mont Blanc." I shall also argue that this *efficacity* of the unthinkable, by which I understand its capacity to produce effects in the absence of causality, is essentially connected to the role of randomness and chance in the situations where this efficacity must be considered, a role that indeed becomes irreducible in these situations. At the same time, however, some of these effects also exhibit certain correlational patterns, thus creating a complex interplay of individual randomness and collective order. Thinking with the unthinkable transforms our understanding of poetry in a broad sense, referring to every creative human endeavor, which is precisely how Shelley understands poetry in *A Defence of Poetry*.

THE ROMANTIC HYPOTHESIS: THE UNTHINKABLE AND ITS EFFECTS

I begin with skepticism and the question of causality, which is crucial for Hume and, following Hume, Kant, and then for most Romantic authors, certainly Shelley, and which is linked in all these authors to the question of ontology. Indeed, "causality" is best seen as an *ontological* category, which pertains to an object or a domain (which may be the world as a whole) the evolution of which is defined by the fact that the state of such an object or domain is exactly determined at all moments by its state at a given moment.[6] By contrast, "determinism" may be seen as an *epistemological* category

having to do with our ability to predict at least in principle the state of an object or domain exactly at any moment once we know its state at a given moment. The term "determinism" has been used, as it was by Pierre-Simon de Laplace (an important reference for Shelley), in the sense of or interchangeably with "causality" in the present sense. However, a given behavior or ontological architecture may be causal without allowing us to predict, even probabilistically, this behavior or events defined by this architecture (which is, in this case, temporal). Unlike Shelley and a few other Romantic authors (such as Friedrich Hölderlin, Heinrich von Kleist, and John Keats), Kant and even the more skeptical Hume appear to have seen the ultimate nature of the world as causal, although there is some debate in the literature on Hume concerning his position on this point. What they denied was that the human mind could have an access to this causality and, as a result, establish definitive *causal* connections between events, rather than surmise *probable* connections between them. In other words, they denied determinism in our interaction with the ultimate workings of the world, but not the causal nature of these ultimate workings themselves. Kant, however, envisions the possibility that such an embodiment by thought of the ultimate causality or more generally ontology of the world, or at least some of their aspects, may be possible, even though the success of any particular attempt at this type cannot be guaranteed. Hence, it is not surprising that Romantics (in the case especially German Romantics, such as Kleist) and Badiou should move in different directions—respectively away from and towards the ontology of Being—from Kant's, as Badiou calls it, "subtractive ontology" (Badiou 133–42).

By "randomness" or "chance" I refer to a manifestation of the unpredictable. Randomness and chance are not the same, but I shall put the difference between them aside, because my main argument equally applies to both. What is important here is that a random or chance event is an unpredictable event. It may not be possible to estimate whether such an event would occur or often to anticipate it as an event. Such an event may or may not hide some underlying causal dynamics that led to this event. In the first case, one essentially encounters an *appearance* of randomness or chance arising from a causal ontological architecture (it can be temporal), the complexity of which prevents us from perceiving its causal workings. As noted above, this understanding of randomness and chance corresponds to both Hume's and Kant's ontological views, and to most ontological views of the Enlightenment, or of the history of Western thought, from the pre-Socratics on. By contrast, what may be called the Romantic understanding of randomness and chance is defined by the suspension of the possibility of the ultimate causality underlying at least some random or chance events, because, as I argue, Romantic thinking, the Romantic hypothesis, precludes one from assuming that the ultimate efficacy of any event corresponds to a specifiable ontological architecture of the world. Under these conditions, causality is suspended automatically at the ultimate level because it would entail such an assignment, even if only

a partial one. Conversely, a meaningful ontology, an ontology that captures the workings of nature in mind, would allow us to think these working as causal, for as Wittgenstein said, that which is not causal we cannot think (175). Not to be causal these workings must be unthinkable, unthinkable even as unthinkable, which makes the term "unthinkable" or "working," or any possible term, provisional and rigorously inapplicable—*at the ultimate level*. This is an important qualification, because both ontology and causality remain operative at other, more surface, levels. Once causality is no longer found in the ultimate workings of the world, randomness or chance becomes irreducible in turn, as soon as these ultimate workings must be taken into account. It becomes irreducible not only in practice, as in the case of a causal but not deterministic ontology, but also in principle, for fundamental reasons, which prevent us from establishing an ontology of random or chance events arising from the ultimate workings of the world, rather than only for epistemological reasons. The recourse to probability in our predictions concerning future events becomes unavoidable, for essential rather than merely practical reasons, at least when we cannot neglect the ultimate efficacity of these events. Causality, just as and, to begin with, ontology, may apply at surface levels, at which we can sometimes also make exact, deterministic predictions, and thus avoid dealing with probability.

It may be helpful to define probability more rigorously, in part by distinguishing it from randomness or chance, because probability in effect reflects the possibility of partial order. Probability deals, theoretically or practically, with providing estimates, possibly numerical, of occurrences of certain individual or collective events. Mathematical probability theory, introduced sometime in the seventeenth century, theorizes such estimations in mathematical terms. The possibility of doing so in rigorously mathematical terms is often seen as justifying a common assumption, described above, of the causal ontological architecture ultimately underlying such events. This philosophy of probability persists throughout the subsequent history of probability theory and the philosophy of probability into our own time. Although one could, as I do here, question this philosophy itself, the use of probability does introduce, in all cases, an element of *order* into situations defined by the role of *randomness and chance* in them and allows us to handle such situations better. In this essay, I adopt the so-called "Bayesian approach" to probability. Although it originates in the work of the eighteenth-century mathematician Thomas Bayes, after whom it is named, and has affinities with the eighteenth-century skeptical thinking, such as that of Hume, this approach was developed in the twentieth century, arguably most prominently by Bruno de Finetti. It defines probability as "a degree of belief" and thus allows one to make estimates even concerning individual and especially unique events, say, a betting on the outcome of a basketball game or, as in Pascal's wager, on the existence of God and salvation of the soul, rather than on frequently repeated events, such as repeated coin tosses. The beauty of the Bayesian approach for my argument in this essay is that it can also be used in the absence of the causal or indeed

any ontology of the events considered. In other words, while causality, if present and if we can access it, may help our estimates, events may also be open to probabilistic estimate without the ultimate causality underlying them or, in accordance with the Romantic hypothesis, without assuming any underlying ultimate ontology behind these effects. These estimates are enabled by relating known patterns of events and previous estimates to new ones, and not by strictly causal relations between events.

The epistemology entailed by the Romantic hypothesis goes beyond that of Hume or Kant, for whom, as the latter states in *The Critique of Pure Reason,* the ultimately noumenal nature of the world is, while unknowable, still thinkable and even thinkable as causal. In other words, the noumenal could, at least in principle, be ontologized, embodied in thought, and moreover in causal terms, insofar as our thinking concerning it is consistent, although, as noted, according to Kant, no such conception can be guaranteed to be true. It can only have a chance to be true. Both Georg W. F. Hegel and Badiou used the fact that Kant allows for this possibility against Kant, with that crucial difference that in Hegel the noumenal is thought in terms of the *consistent* One, even if the multiple-One, and in Badiou as the *inconsistent* multiple-without-One, which, however, must be thought of consistently and hence logically, in this respect following Kant. The situation is different with the irreducibly unthinkable at stake in the Romantic hypothesis. Things of nature and mind do exist, but *no* knowledge and, most crucially, even conception, however partial, of how they *ultimately* exist is possible. "Ultimately" is, again, a crucial qualification, given that we can conceive and know some of the effects of this existence and infer the impossibility of conceiving of the ultimate character of this existence from these effects and in order to account for them. One could even define existence as a capacity to have effects on other things that exist, although the actual *mode* of existence of some existing entities may be unavailable to thought. The Romantic hypothesis concerns such entities.

Hume adds an intriguing twist on this problematic, a twist that brings him close to the Romantics, although in their most radical thinking, the Romantics move beyond Hume as well, just as they move beyond Kant and Hegel, or, as, in Nietzsche's idiom, philosophers of the futures, beyond Heidegger and Badiou. According to Deleuze:

> The first act of modern [Humean] skepticism consists in making belief the basis of knowledge. … The second act consisted is denouncing illegitimate beliefs as those which don't obey the rule that are in fact productive of knowledge (probabilism, calculus of probabilities). But in a final refinement, or third act, illegitimate beliefs in the Self, the World, and God appear as the horizon of all possible legitimate beliefs, or as the lowest degree of belief. For if everything is belief, including knowledge, everything is a question of degree of belief, even the delirium of non-knowledge. (44)

This is a powerful point (on both Hume's and Deleuze's part), including as concerns the irreducible role of probability under these conditions. It suggests that ontology may be *inconsistent*, as it is, as noted earlier, in Badiou's scheme. Such ontology may even be the delirium of nonknowledge, a form of madness. Kant would not have accepted this. Nor would have Kant accepted the irreducible role of probability, irreducible insofar as any belief has a degree of its plausibility, which—the degree of belief—is arguably the most philosophically cogent definition of probability itself. This argument leads Deleuze to locate in Hume the concept of the Outside that exceeds merely exteriority because it is defined by the concept of *relations*, rather than things: everything is a relation even single entities or what so appears. However, this extra-exterior Outside can still be embodied in thought, given an ontology, perhaps by way of a delirium of nonthought, even though the full measure of causality governing this outside is seen beyond human ontological thinking by Hume, or perhaps even Kant. Kant appears to give us more chance on this score, a chance that, as I noted, Hegel converts into an imperative of philosophical thought.

Although Hegel's would appear a natural and even the only possible response to Kant, Romantics took a different lesson and moved in a different direction from Hume's and Kant's philosophy than Hegel did, especially from the distinction between phenomena and noumena or things-in-themselves, the starting point of Kant's philosophy. (As just indicated, Hume's extra-exterior Outside invoked by Deleuze may be seen along similar lines.) Romantics saw this distinction, or again, Hume's extra-exterior Outside, as implying a very different possibility, or a different hypothesis, according to which the ultimate nature of the Outside is no longer merely unknowable, as in Kant, but is also irreducibly unthinkable, again, ultimately unthinkable even as unthinkable. This also implies that one can no longer rigorously speak of the Outside either, any more than use any other terms or concept, such as nature, mind, thing, thing-in-itself, real, and so forth. One can only use these or any terms provisionally. It also follows that under these conditions, that is, given that there is no ultimate causality to guide us, any thinking or knowledge concerning future events, be it philosophical, scientific, ethical, or political, is essentially, irreducibly hypothetical and essentially, irreducibly probabilistic. Probability is fundamental, irreducible, rather than a practical matter arising because we cannot track the underlying causality of these events. Any such hypothesis is a belief that can only be entertained to one degree or another and hence only with a certain probability, and never with certainty, however much one might believe in this certainty. Hence, Deleuze invokes probability and the degree of belief as the definition of probability, the definition adopted here, in connection with Hume's concept of the Outside. It follows that the Romantic assumption concerning the irreducibly unthinkable is also a hypothesis, the Romantic hypothesis, which can be assigned a probability, a degree of belief, and that it can only be a hypothesis is in fact a consequence of this hypothesis itself.

While one could trace some earlier, possibly even pre-Socratic intimations of this type of understanding, it does not appear to be found in its full-fledged form before the late-eighteenth century, in Kleist and Shelley, and other Romantic authors, in part, again, by way of thinking through Hume's and Kant's critique of causality and taking this critique to its limit. This understanding then extends to Darwin and Nietzsche, and to twentieth-century science, especially quantum theory, and philosophy, in particular in the work of such thinkers as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Paul de Man. It is not easy to extend this list, if one thinks of those who subscribe to this type of thinking in full measure. Indeed, this thinking has been, and continues to be, met with unremitting resistance.[7] However, that does not necessarily make this thinking, or again, the Romantic hypothesis, less probable, less likely to be correct than more ontological alternatives. De Man's work is especially linked to German critical philosophy and Romanticism. Although his reading of Kleist and Kant pursues the same line of argument, de Man's arguably most dramatic expression of his thinking appears in his famous assessment of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, one of his most quoted elaborations. De Man says:

> *The Triumph of Life* warns us that *nothing*, whether deed, word, thought or text, *ever* happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that preceded, follows, or exists elsewhere, but only as a random event whose power, like the power of death, is due to the randomness of its occurrence. (122)

The present argument in effect questions this claim, at least in this strong form, and thus suggests a different reading of Shelley's poem, which is more rigorously in accord with the Romantic hypothesis, from which de Man appears to depart here. He appears to see the ultimate nature of things in terms of (the ontology of) absolute randomness, excluded by the Romantic hypothesis, which would not assign and would indeed prohibit assigning this nature absolute randomness, any more than a causal nature, or any other "nature," such term being no longer applicable either at the ultimate level. Before I explain this difference, and in order to do so, I would like to consider what de Man says next. Shelley's poem, he argues, offers yet another warning:

> It also warns us why and how these events then have to be reintegrated into a historical and aesthetic system of recuperation that repeats itself regardless of the exposure of its fallacy. This process differs entirely from the recuperative and nihilistic allegories of historicism. If it is true and unavoidable that any reading is a monumentalization of sorts, the way in which Rousseau is read and disfigured in *The Triumph of Life* puts Shelley among the few readers who "guessed whose statue those fragments had composed." Reading as disfiguration, to the very

> extent that it resists historicism, turns out to be historically more reliable than the products of historical archeology. To monumentalize this observation into a *method* of reading would be to regress from the rigor exhibited by Shelley which is exemplary precisely because it refuses to be generalized into a system. (122–23)

De Man is right to argue for the difference between these two processes of historical organization—a "reintegrat[ion] of [discrete and random] events into a historical and aesthetic system of recuperation that repeats itself regardless of the exposure of its fallacy" enacted or thematized by Shelley's poem and that of "the recuperative and nihilistic allegories of historicism." De Man may also be right in his assessment of the superior historical efficacy of disfigurative readings, such as the one offered by *The Triumph of Life*. There may still be a question whether the process enacted by Shelley's poem may also produce something beyond such recuperations, even given the darker vision of the poem, a question that I shall put aside. There may also be an implied critique of Foucault's early archeological project, which I shall put aside as well, germane as this project is to the problematic considered in this essay. On the other hand, de Man's insistence on the absolutely random nature of the ultimate ontology, that strong "*nothing*" of de Man's claim ("*nothing*, whether deed, word, thought or text, *ever* happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that preceded, follows, or exists elsewhere but only as a random event") may, in my view, be questioned. Is this necessarily always the case, both ontologically in general and as a characterization of the lesson of *The Triumph of Life*? Without unequivocally answering this question, because it may hinge on de Man's concept of "event" elaborated elsewhere (to which, however, he does not expressly connect this elaboration), it should, nevertheless, be clear that the Romantic hypothesis, as understood here, entails a different ontology. In this view, the relationships between and among events, as effects of the irreducible unthinkable efficacity, defined by the Romantic hypothesis, could be both random and organized or correlated, and we must account for both types of effects, which would be difficult to do if the ultimate nature of things were absolutely random. This is, of course, not the same as to say that, in the second case, there are causal connections between and among these events, which (de Man is right in this score) are always imposed *après coup* by one or another historical and aesthetic system of recuperation. These connections are only probabilistic or statistical, even in the case of organized collectivities of events, always defined by statistical correlations rather than an underlying causal order. In other words, an organization, an order, is possible in the absence of causality, and this possibility is missing in de Man's analysis, although it may be found in Shelley, including in *The Triumph of Life*. It is of some interest that, while randomness and chance play a major role in de Man's work, the question of probability rarely, if ever, enters his analysis. It follows, however, that how such organized collectivities of

events come about, what their ultimate efficacy is, is beyond not only our knowledge but also our thought itself. Could we, nevertheless, predict such events? Yes, sometimes! This is possible by using known patterns of events and previous estimates.

It is true that not all Romantic authors accepted this radical philosophical position or, again, hypothesis. (The Romantic hypothesis is still a hypothesis, the fact that, as I noted, is a consequence of this hypothesis itself.) Even Hölderlin, Kleist, Shelley, and Keats were hesitant and oscillated between this and less radical alternative hypotheses, and their different works reflect these oscillations. Some Romantics rejected it altogether, as, I would argue, William Blake, Charlotte Smith, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth did. Most Romantics, however, have confronted the situation defined by the Romantic hypothesis as a *possibility*, even though they might have found it troubling or impossible to accept.

"THE SECRET STRENGTH OF THINGS": THOUGHT AND THE UNTHINKABLE IN "MONT BLANC"

In order to show how the Romantic hypothesis does its work in Shelley's poetry, I would like to offer a reading of "Mont Blanc." The famous opening of the poem establishes its essential assumptions. These assumptions are included in all subsequent hypotheses envisioned by the poem, which, I shall argue, offers a series of hypotheses concerning nature and mind, or their relationships, without allowing for any of them to be more than a hypothesis, although the poem appears (one cannot be quite certain) to ultimately settle on one of these hypothesis, the Romantic hypothesis. Shelley begins as follows:

> The everlasting universe of things
> Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
> Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
> Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
> The source of human thought its tribute brings
> Of waters,—with a sound but half its own.
> (1–6)

Shelley appears to suggest here that perhaps the only assumption that we can make, empirically, as it were, with any certainty is that of a flow, a "ceaseless motion" (32), of conscious thought that we experience. This is not an uncommon assumption, expressly found in Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Freud, Foucault, Derrida, and many others, however much they differ, and they do, in inferences from this assumption or other hypotheses concerning the mind and the world they make. I would contend that one of the poem's points, extending Hume's radical skepticism, is that anything else, such as various ontological and

epistemological positions invoked in the poem, is a hypothesis based on this and other assumptions, a hypothesis that may be more or less probable, but is never certain, although those who entertain them may assume their certainty.

One might argue that more is assumed in these lines, for example, as Earl Wasserman and others contended, the existence of a certain universal mind with which our particular human mind interacts, which, thus, implies an ontological reading of the poem (221–54). Shelley does speak here of the everlasting universe of things that flows through the mind, which could be seen as a strong ontological claim. It could also be argued on the basis of some of his philosophical writings at the time, that, critical as he was of the metaphysical materialism (which would consider ascribing to material entities attributes definable independently of thought), by "things" Shelley might well have meant "ideas" (*Prose* 173–75). This could be read either as establishing, hypothesizing, an ontology of thought or as a step toward the Romantic hypothesis, which emerges at the end of the poem. Wasserman further nuances his reading of the poem by bringing into consideration the concept of Being, a Being beyond One Mind, a conception that does appear in some of Shelley's philosophical writings and that Wasserman cogently relates to Shelley's concept of Power in "Mont Blanc" and related poems, in part, again, cogently, via Hume (229–54).[8] This reading, however, still remains within ontological, if skeptical (Humean), limits, with some Heideggerian overtones. Heidegger is not mentioned by Wasserman, and perhaps Heidegger's philosophy was not part of the immediate genealogy of his reading of the poem. The ontological character of this reading is hardly in question; and Wasserman's reading of Hume, too, remains within the limits of exteriority rather than a more radical Outside, which is invoked by Deleuze and which brings Hume closer to Shelley. There is also no Humean delirium of thought in Wasserman's reading, although, as will be seen presently, "Mont Blanc" allows for it. In any event, I would argue that "Mont Blanc" appears to be more, and more deliberately, ambivalent on any assumption that these opening lines or the rest of the poem suggest, especially as concerns any given or even possible ontology. The reason for my argument for this ambiguity is that the remainder of Shelley's poem runs a spectrum of hypothetical possibilities in this regard. Are things thoughts? Do they exist apart from thought, or thought apart from matter? What comes first, matter or thought, or yet something else which is both, or—this possibility should not be missed—neither, or indeed nothing that we can possibly conceive of or name, such as Being or Power? Hence, it is plausible to read the poem's opening lines as equally hypothetical. In particular, there is no strong reason to assume that Shelley's particular image of this flow, or even its conception as a "flow," let alone a flow of the everlasting Universe of things is necessarily presumed to be true. We may be deceived as concerns anything that we think, including the flow of thought we experience, a possibility famously entertained, albeit rejected, by Descartes, but, as explained

above via Deleuze, not entirely discounted by Hume (Descartes 12). "Mont Blanc" does not fail to reflect on this possibility:

> I look on high;
> Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
> The veil of life and death? or do I lie
> In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
> Spread far around and inaccessibly
> Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
> Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
> That vanishes among the viewless gales!
> (52–59)

However, even if the flow of thought is a deception, a delirium, it is still a starting point for any other thought. For, where else would we start, as Hegel argues in considering sense-consciousness in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (59–78) or Edmund Husserl in *Ideas* (43)? But what is the next point, which is to say what is the ontology and, since it has always been part of the question, causality or the lack thereof of the world, of mind and matter? Shelley's conclusion, after the poem moves through several other possible ontological and epistemological hypotheses without settling on any of them, suggests an answer. It would, again, be against the spirit or, as the case may be, the letter of the poem to claim that one can give a definitive answer, and the poem ends with a question mark. The conclusion instead introduces the poem's most radical hypothesis, which amounts to the Romantic hypothesis. The last part, Part 5, of the poem begins with "Mont Blanc yet gleams on high: —the power is there" (127). Now, however, it is the power (power with a small "p" and a provisional name, of which the Power with a capital "P" is an effect produced in our thought, in cooperation with matter, the brain, not invoked by "Mont Blanc" but a frequent word elsewhere in Shelley) to also reveal that of which no gleaming can ever be glimpsed. It is that which cannot be known or even thought of, for example, as power, ultimately not even thought of as unthinkable. It is, I would contend, here where Shelley, arguably for the first time in his poetry (although other poems in the *Alastor* volume, which includes "Mont Blanc," could be read along these lines as well), goes beyond Hume or Kant. As explained earlier, for Hume and Kant the outside is, while unknown or even unknowable, still thinkable, and one can still, in principle, make conjectures concerning what this outside could be and, at least according to Kant, have a chance for such a conjecture to be true, even though this truth cannot be fully certain. By contrast, Shelley now conjectures that it may be impossible to make any such conjecture. At the very least, one could read these lines as suggesting this conjecture, in other words, the Romantic hypothesis.

> The *secret* strength of things
> Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome

> Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy?
> (139–44, emphasis added)

These lines are often read as an affirmation of human imagination, for example, in perceiving, conceiving (which is always part of perceiving), and naming: earth, stars, and sea, or, of course, Mont Blanc, as a white, snowy mountain or "thou," or other names the poem gives it, or whatever other things or ideas the poem names, such as strength or power. There is no special problem with this reading. Indeed, it would be difficult to avoid it. One should not, however, forget Shelley's question mark, customary in his ending, most famously in the unending ending of *The Triumph of Life* "What is life?" Or think of the equally famous question mark ending of "Ode to the West Wind": "If Winter comes can Spring be far behind?" (70). Contrary to the affirmative implication of this question marks, implications that cannot be denied, Spring could be far behind, and the poem is not giving us any certainty as to how far and how close Spring is when Winter comes. Here, too, our expectations are a matter of probability, even though at the literal, meteorological level one could bet with considerable certainty that Spring will come at some point, more distant, though, it may be than we might want, but not really by much. However, at the allegorical level (also in de Man's sense), which relates to an awaking of the whole of mankind (thus echoing the allegory of *Prometheus Unbound*), it may be a different story, entailing a much more complex sequence or un-sequence, mixture, of "seasons."

The first three lines of the ending of "Mont Blanc" just cited—"The *secret* strength of things / Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome / Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!" (139–40; emphasis added)—could still be read by giving "the *secret* strength of things" the status of a hidden ontological architecture of things, single, *à la* Heidegger, or multiple, *à la* Badiou, another two conjectures suggested by the poem along the way. The last three lines, however, appear to give a different, more radical meaning to this "secrecy." This "secret" is not really a secret, because, similarly to Derrida's concept of secret (which Derrida actually associates with literature), it can never be revealed, become known as something that was previously hidden somewhere (Derrida, *On the Name* 29–31). Thus, secret is not a right word here. There is no right word; there is no word at all to name this "secrecy." Hence, Shelley ends with a question mark. Shelley's use of "to be" in "What were thou … if" at least strongly compels and, I would argue, makes it difficult to avoid this thought of the possibility that nature, including, it follows, the nature of *thought* itself, cannot be thought. It is true that Shelley's final lines or the Romantic hypothesis in general may more easily be seen as pertaining to nature, matter. The Romantic hypothesis, however, may also apply to the human mind, even if we consider it apart from matter, say, by decoupling it from the workings

of the brain, similarly to the way Kant saw the ultimate nature of the mind as noumenal, which is, again, less radical than seeing it as being beyond the reach of thought altogether. Thus, rather than only affirming the capacity and incessant working of the human mind's imaginings (although it does this, too, of course), the poem's vision of the "Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine" (12) carries a darker and deeper message, at least in this reading. The most radical, dark, vision that Shelley appears to entertain in ending the poem, as "Mont Blanc yet gleams on high," is of the possibility of that of which no glimpse can be possible, of the darkness that, unlike that of John Milton's Hell, cannot be made visible (*Paradise Lost*, I: 63). The poem's ending tells us that, while our imagination can construct various conceptions of matter and mind, or the ways of thinking and knowing, it is also able to imagine that the ultimate character of matter or mind may be beyond human thought altogether.

Thus, if Badiou's argument, with which I started here, is that "when thought *decides* upon what is true it binds itself to Being," Shelley's poetry questions the efficacy and even the possibility of this type of decision. Some of Shelley's *darker* poems ("dark" is a persistent word in them), such as *Alastor*, *Julian and Maddalo*, and *The Triumph of Life*, tell us that no such binding is possible, because that which makes the world of nature and mind possible is itself unthinkable, ultimately unthinkable even as unthinkable. "The deep truth is imageless," Shelley famously said in his more hopeful *Prometheus Unbound* (II, iv, 116). In his darker and more skeptical or ultra-skeptical works, however, the ultimate nature of matter and mind, is too deep for truth, or for the ideas of "depth," "nature," "thing," or any idea we can form.

The conception of poetry as that which can partake in something of the divine or of some more human "Penetralium of mystery," invoked by Keats—captured by the divine madness of Plato's *Ion* (always on Shelley's mind) or by means of Keats's "negative capability" (which only needs "half knowledge," and thus is not without some divine madness either)—is still grounded in this possibility of the deep truth conveyed, as imaged or imageless, by poetry, by the poetic bind between thought and Being (1: 193–94). As I explained at the outset, the possibility of such a capture by whatever means, poetic, philosophical, or other (means that may be contrasted with or juxtaposed to each other otherwise) may be seen as Platonism or ontology of Being in its most general form. Thus, even Badiou's Platonism of the multiple-Being still conforms to this conception, because this multiple is not thought of as the irreducibly unthinkable, except perhaps if one reads Badiou against his own grain. As I have also explained, while reversing the narrowly or conventionally conceived Platonism, skepticism, too, would be seen as a form of Platonism in this general sense, unless one sees Shelley's thinking as skepticism taken beyond its Platonist limits. Be it as it may on this score, Shelley's more radical poems, or some of Keats's late poems, such as *The Fall of Hyperion*, bring us to the limits where this possibility is no longer available, is destroyed by these poems' analytics. As a result, poetry must become something else, and it does in these poems.

"Being" or (since Being becomes another ultimately inapplicable concept), in the language of "Mont Blanc" but with quotation marks around each word in mind, "the secret strength of things that governs thought," becomes irrevocably unhinged from thought at the ultimate level of our understanding of the world, material or human. We can decide upon one hypothesis or another, or, as I shall explain presently, upon what to do, but we cannot decide upon what is ultimately true (and we cannot rigorously use any concepts of truth either), because we cannot conceive of what it is, or, again, rigorously apply the idea of truth at the ultimate level of … what? One might say that things of nature and mind, ultimately linked to the material efficacy of the brain exist but they have no Being, even if this word is taken under erasure as it was by Heidegger in his later works (*The Question of Being*). Perhaps even Derrida's erasure, introduced to deconstruct that of Heidegger, is not sufficient here (*Of Grammatology* 19, 61).

"UNACKNOWLEDGED LEGISLATORS OF THE WORLD": TRAGIC AFFIRMATION AND ACTS OF POETRY

Thinking toward and with the unthinkable is not merely a philosophical speculation concerning the ontology, or lack thereof, of nature or mind. First of all, this thinking is a rigorously formed hypothesis, the Romantic hypothesis, based on, rigorously inferred from, certain empirically observed phenomena and events. Hence, its affinity with empiricism and, as concerns the character of this hypothesis itself, as an inferential hypothesis, with more radical, skeptical forms of empiricism, such as that of Hume, which, however, this hypothesis transcends. Secondly, the Romantic hypothesis has practical, specifically ethical and political, implications, which I would like to consider in closing this essay. Under the conditions defined by the Romantic hypothesis, just as all our theoretical thinking (including, again, the Romantic hypothesis itself), all our practical, such as ethical and political, thinking becomes fundamentally hypothetical, and hence, is governed by the degree of our belief in, by probabilistic estimates concerning, the validity of hypotheses we make, and never by a guaranteed certainty, even though some may believe in the validity of a given ethical or political system with certainty, a belief that is in conflict with the Romantic hypothesis. Shelley's skeptical or ultra-skeptical works, such as "Mont Blanc," *Alastor*, *Julian and Maddalo*, and *The Triumph of Life*, especially reflect the nature of situation just defined in both theoretical and practical domains (and these two domains are reciprocally interactive). But even his more hopeful works, such as *Prometheus Unbound* and *Adonais*, suggest that one can at most only bet on the possibility of a better world with an unclear sense of what such a world is, and even that chance is often our best hope, even a hope against our best bet. For our best estimates give such a better world a little

chance. Thus, it may be true, as suggested in "Mont Blanc," by way of yet another hypothesis, that

> Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
> Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
> By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
> Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.
> (80–84)

But whatever alternative to those "large codes of fraud and woe" one can suggests is only a belief, and thus also a bet, a double bet at that—first, on a possible success of this alternative, and second, more radically, on the fact that this alternative is itself workable even in principle. The second bet may be no more certain that the first, as is shown by the case of the Maniac in *Julian and Maddalo*, which merits a brief digression here.

Julian, the narrator, thinks in ontologically causal terms, which ground his, essentially Enlightenment-like, vision of or hypothesis (although Julian believes in it with certainty) concerning human destiny, akin to that suggested by and echoing the lines from "Mont Blanc" just cited (*Julian and Maddalo*, 179–91). Maddalo does not base his thinking on the Romantic hypothesis either. He argues and makes his bet on how things are from, as it were, the other side, "the darker side," of destiny, an argument that Julian initially attributes to "pride," but ultimately sees, rightly, as grounded in a deep and complex vision of the world, the complexity that the Maniac's case exemplifies as well (49). However, Maddalo's challenge to Julian—"'My dear friend,' / Said Maddalo, 'my judgment will not bend / To your opinion, though I think you might / Make such a system refutation tight / As far as words go'" (191–95)—and the very juxtaposition of their views, against the story of the Maniac, move the poem toward the Romantic hypothesis. The only thing known about the Maniac is that he suffers from a severe mental disorder, apparently caused by an unhappy love affair. While Shelley's vision in the poem may be dark, tragic, it is not negative or nihilistic. Instead, it reflects an affirmation of life under the condition of tragedy, as Nietzsche would have it, and Nietzsche also spoke of his love of the uncertainty of the future. Nor, by the same token, is it a vision of resignation and the same I would argue (thus taking a more affirmative view of the poem than does de Man) might be said about *The Triumph of Life*. In some cases it may be wiser to take a measured, even minimal, action, and leave the rest to life, conquered by life as we are bound to be in the end and unanswered as this question "What is Life?" remains. Maddalo does a few things that help the Maniac, perhaps not much, but as much as it may be possible to help, insofar as one can count on anything at all in this tragic case. Julian, who initially thought that he could achieve more by a kind of proto-psychoanalytic treatment, appears to come to accept the limits of any possible help in this case and leaves the situation in the hands of Maddalo and life itself (549–75).[9] In this case, Julian

realized, this might be a wiser course of action, a better bet, even though, in the end, life showed little kindness to the Maniac, the story that the poem ultimately does not tell us: "she [Maddalo's daughter] told me [Julian] how / All happened—but the cold world shall not know" (616–17). Yet, again, Shelley ends, if not with a question mark, with making a point of not telling "how all happened," not the least, I think, because it is not really possible to know or even to conceive or imagine how it *all* ultimately happened.

In other cases, however, even if under the same ultimate, tragic, conditions, we take stronger positions or actions and wager on their future impact with *more* certainty.[10] It may, however, not be possible to have, even in principle, a *guaranteed* certainty in our ideas, systems of thought, and actions—philosophical, aesthetic, ethical, political, or other. They may work or not, fulfill their promise or not, last a while or lose their effectiveness quickly. Nothing could assuredly guide us otherwise. Indeed, the existence of anything, for example, a form of Being, that could do so would deprive us of our capacity to experiment with our thought and vision, and to actively shape the future as a result, because it would only allow us to follow and partake in what would happen in any event in conformity with the ultimate underlying causality of the world. It would deprive us of a more poetic way of life, defined by thinking that we can experiment, take our chances, with the future, or with anything we can offer to the future, and whenever necessary, restage our experiments or stage new experiments, and change, sometimes decisively, our positions, as the world and we ourselves change.

But we can go further and also shape future events and situations. Shelley was a political reformer, too, and his poetry tells us that ethical and political thought and actions can be productive under the conditions defined by the Romantic hypothesis, which takes us beyond Platonism and skepticism alike. We become poets, "unacknowledged legislators of the World," as Shelley defined poets in *A Defence of Poetry* (*Poetry and Prose* 508), extending the concept to all creative human endeavors, only when we stage experiments that allow us to better predict, and in the first place, shape and even define the future, without a guarantee that these experiments will succeed. Otherwise, as I said, poetry is not a *creation* of something really new, but merely guessing what is already there or is bound to happen, or would have happened, in any event, without us actively shaping the field of possible events. It is not the poetry of the future, to paraphrase Nietzsche on philosophy, indeed more than paraphrase, given that philosophy is poetry, too, in Shelley's broader sense of poetry. Poetry is what actively defines or redefines the field of possibilities, or of probabilities, more likely possibilities, in spite of and because of the absence of certainty. It is in this sense and with this conception of act in mind that one might, as I do in my title, speak of "acts of poetry" in Shelley. Poetic works themselves, again, of whatever kind, are only "eternal," as Shelley says, with more optimism, in the *Defence*, insofar as they enable us to stage further experiments by using them, or by creating new poetry with their help, and thus continue to extend these works into

the future. It is only these continuing extensions of poetic works (again, in whatever field) that can enable poets to be legislators, acknowledged or unacknowledged, of the world.

This capacity or a survival of any given work of poetry cannot, however, be guaranteed. Shelley appears to be somewhat more optimistic on this point in the *Defence*, and his other more hopeful works, such as *Prometheus Unbound* and *Adonais*. His darker and more skeptical or, again, ultra-skeptical works, discussed here, tell us that at best we only have a chance. But a chance, even a small chance, is not nothing, and hence, these works are not entirely without hope either, even *The Triumph of Life*, nearly abandoned as this hope may be there, implying, moreover, that ultimately, in a long run, in a *long* long run, nothing survives, no matter how poetically capacious. Indeed, accepting an only probable, but ultimately uncertain, future for our ideas, systems of thought, or programs of actions, and if necessary, changing them, as the world and we ourselves change, may be a better bet than believing in their *permanence* by deciding on their permanent truth binding thought to Being once and for all. It may even be our best chance to successfully handle our interactions with the world, natural or human.

NOTES

1. The inconsistent nature of this multiple, which follows from the mathematical and specifically set-theoretical determination of Badiou's ontology, additionally distinguishes Badiou's Platonism from all previous forms of Platonism or thinking of Being. It should also be noted that Badiou's concept of "event" (defined by him as always an event of trans-Being) exceeds ontology in his mathematical sense, but I would argue and have argued that this conception is not sufficient to reach the beyond of Platonism and ontology considered in this essay (cf. Plotnitsky).
2. I have discussed this aspect of Badiou's work (cf. Plotnitsky).
3. Derrida introduces several other concepts accompanying, and sometimes correlative to, that of metaphysics of presence, such as logocentrism and, via Heidegger, ontotheology.
4. The present conception of multiple is closer to Derrida's concept of "dissemination" (*Dissemination* 173–286). It also has important connections to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (e.g. 42–45).
5. The same relation obtains in the case of Platonism and Kant's transcendental philosophy, but, while I shall refer to Kant on several occasions in this essay, I am more concerned with the relationships between Platonism and skepticism. Shelley has manifest connections to skepticism and specifically Hume, while he has at most a second-hand knowledge of Kant, most likely via Sir William Drummond's *Academical Questions*, although there are other possible, more mediated, sources, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetry and prose. Once one moves to German Romantics, Kant's philosophy becomes central.
6. A related category, pertinent in the context of Shelley's early poetry, most especially *Queen Mab,* is that of necessity, which, however, I shall put aside here.

Causality is a more general category, given that necessity generally implies causality, but not the other way around.

7. The reasons for this resistance would require a separate analysis, which cannot be undertaken here. The fact of this resistance is not in doubt, however.
8. Shelley's concept of power, which owes to Drummond and which may be seen along the lines of Michel Foucault's concept of power (92–93), would require further analysis, which would not, however, affect the present reading.
9. There are important further complexities involved in Julian's decisions and actions at this point. While I cannot address these complexities here, they would further support my argument, because Julian's case shows that all such decisions and actions are shaped by a complex set of pressing imperatives, connections, obligations, and so forth (576–83).
10. From this perspective, one might also rethink the category of necessity as divorced from that of causality, at least from global or totalizing causality (this concept of necessity would require local causalities, which are, again, consistent with the Romantic hypothesis), as Shelley perhaps does, especially in *Prometheus Unbound*, which may be read in terms of "necessity without causality." But I do not think one could read *Queen Mab* in this way. See Note 6 above.

WORKS CITED

Badiou, Alain. *Briefings on Existence*. Trans. Norman Madarasz. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006. Print.

De Finneti, Bruno. *Philosophical Lectures on Probability*. Ed. A. Mura. Trans. H. Hosni. Berlin and New York: Springer Verlag, 2008. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*. Trans. Anne Boyman. Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2005. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. Lane. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1985. Print.

De Man, Paul. *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1984. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. B. Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982. Print.

———. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. G. C. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992. Print.

———. *On the Name*. Trans. T. Dutoit. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

———. *Positions*. Trans. A. Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981. Print.

Descartes, René. *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*. 1641. Trans. R. Ariew and D. Cress. London: Hackett, 2006. Print.

Drummond, William. *Academical Questions*. 1805. London: General Books LLC, 2012. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. Trans. R. Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print.

Hegel, G.W.F. *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. 1807. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Early Greek Thinking*. 1946. Trans. D. F. Krell and F. A. Capuzzi. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984. Print.

———. *The Question of Being*. 1956. Trans. J. T. Wilde and W. Kluback. New York: Twayne, 1958. Print.

Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas: A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology.* Trans. D. Moran. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason.* 1781. Trans. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print.

Keats, John. *The Letters of John Keats.* 2 vols. Ed. H. E. Rollins. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001. Print.

Plotnitsky, Arkady. "Experimenting with Ontologies: Sets, Spaces, and Topoi with Grothendieck and Badiou." *Society and Space* 30.2 (2012): 351–68. Print.

Pulos, C. E. *The Deep Truth: A Study of Shelley's Skepticism.* Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1954. Print.

Shelley, P. B. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose.* Eds. D. H. Reiman and S. B. Powers. New York: W. W. Norton, 1977. Print.

———. *Shelley's Prose*. Ed. D. L. Clark. Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1954. Print.

Wasserman, Earl. *Shelley: A Critical Reading.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1971. Print.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* 1924. Trans. C. K. Ogden. London: Routledge, 1985. Print.

This page intentionally left blank

Part II
The Poetics of Thought

This page intentionally left blank

5 Prolegomenon to the Remnants
Shelley's "Triumph of Life"

Simon Jarvis

Alas I kiss you Julie

When a mask falls, what should be underneath? A face, of course. But what when "mask after mask" falls? If

> Mask after mask fell from the countenance
> And form of all
>
> (Shelley, "Triumph of Life" 535–36)

then one obvious way of making sense of this is to explain to oneself that one mask falls from the countenance of each masker, thus totalling, altogether, a fall of "mask after mask." But that is not what it feels like. Nor is it even, necessarily, the literal sense, which might just as well be that many masks, mask after mask, fell from each individual's face. Because

> Mask after mask fell from the countenance

comes first, separately, "[a]nd form of all" only later, it is, in any case, most likely that this sense is the one which will first be vividly present to our imaginations, and the more intelligible, less surprising sense only secondarily and subsequently, if at all.[1]

If one mask falls, we see the face beneath, and perhaps we can trust unmasking. If mask after mask falls, we may wonder whether unmasking itself is a ruse, may wonder whether we shall ever get to see a face. And, perhaps, if the face we imagine seeing is an especially necessary one to us, we may, in the face of such protracted disappointment, of mask after mask's falling without our ever being permitted to look on the divine countenance, feel furious. We might then say something melodramatically glamorous like this:

> *The Triumph of Life* warns us that nothing, whether deed, word, thought, or text, ever happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that precedes, follows, or exists elsewhere, but only as a random event whose power, like the power of death, is due to the randomness of its occurrence.
>
> (de Man 122)

The sentence resembles a legal disclaimer—"deed, word, thought, or text"… "relation, positive or negative"… "precedes, follows, or exists"—in its exhaustive treading out of any imaginable ember of meaning. Its *grand refus* gives on to a monadology: of windowless nothings. And yet, in this field of perfectly deleted meaning, Shelley's poem is still able to—"warn"—"us" (who, "we," in *such* a cosmos?)—of something. Sooner than wait patiently for a face to be revealed, it seems, we might be tempted to insist that we didn't want to see it. It was "disfigured" anyway—or, if it isn't, it soon will be.

Maskfall marks the beginning and end of what traces survive of "The Triumph of Life." When the sun springs forth, "the mask / Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth" (3–4). Here is the face which is revealed when that mask drops:

> All flowers in field or forest which unclose
>
> Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
> Swinging their censers in the element,
> With orient incense lit by the new ray
>
> Burned slow & inconsumably, & sent
> Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air, (9–14)

Part of what absorbs us in this poem lies in the fact that the intensity of its imaginations of personhood—of owning a face—can touch us as more really incarnate when they concern personifications even than when they concern persons. It is not just as though the flowers have faces. Their "eyelids" tremble. "[T]rembling" catches several different possibilities at once and leaves them suspended. If you watch a child waking up, her eyelids do sometimes work briefly with little quivers before they retract to show the gaze; but the kiss before which eyelids tremble could be erotic as well as maternal. And there is also another possibility in these working eyelids: anything before which anything else trembles might also be something which is deeply feared. The face is shown for vulnerable in a fleeting line thrown off. The face of these flowers is brought as alive as a human face by the multiple possibilities of feeling implied, by its respiring at every place with inward meaning. The "eyelids" seem "lit"—even though it is the "censers" which are said to be so. The eyelids are lit as though with their own light and not merely with the sun's. Sometimes such an encounter with woundable beauty can be experienced as intolerable, suggesting from very fear of causing hurt, as it were, a compulsion to wound the face and, what, get it over with?

> Et le printemps et la verdure
> Ont tant humilié mon coeur,
> Que j'ai puni sur une fleur
> L'insolence de la Nature.
>
> (Baudelaire 224)

Ours is an age of approved and naturalized psychosis. But Shelley is not Baudelaire, and there is nothing inevitable about this disorder of the soul, about the need to mutilate what others cherish.

This trembling returns only a little later, once the visionary's vision has begun:

> Like the young moon
>
> When on the sunlit limits of the night
> Her white shell trembles amid crimson air (79–81)

Never mind for the moment what is like the young moon. It is the deadest of dead letters to call the moon "her." By itself, it barely even reminds us of personhood. But these two lines produce something quite different. "Sunlit limits" is the most delicate of intercalations: "lit" is stretched out to "limit," in a way which I believe Shelley learned from Pope ("And *Pan* to Moses lends his *pagan* horn"—emphases mine).[2] And then this little inserted syllable of "mi" is itself taken up in the following line, with a phonological chiasmus: "a*mi*d": "cr*im*son." There scarcely can be a more refined or luminous pair of lines in all English verse, and what they do is to give the illusion of the moon's being brought alive, insisting all the while, with their plain reference, on her not being so—for it is a *shell* that so trembles, is just that insentient carapace which the new born organism would discard and peep out of. The lambdacism, and the word "trembles," echo in our verse sensorium with that first face shown in the poem, those eyelids which tremble to the kiss of day.

How sweet it is to sense these dead letters, merely by their configuration in tunes and measures, seeming to come alive! What a delicious temptation to find the living and the nonliving, and the human and the inhuman, mingled and interwoven and interentangled almost to the point of indiscriminability, as though if, because of its tendentially total liquidability and replaceability, all human life were now seemed to us in the end merely spectral, merely phantasmagorical, then the recompense for this would at least be that specters and phantasms or even rocks and stones and trees might seem to be more satisfyingly animated! The name for this temptation in the poem is "Nepenthe," and Shelley takes the full measure of its intoxication.

There is in "The Triumph of Life" this double force: that mere pronominal peculiarity, the private property of what is mine and yours and his and hers, is made to fall away like a stream of masks, like mask after mask—which, literally, is to say like person after person—but that at the same time the poem imagines the embodied reality of personhood—the face, its eyelids, its trembling, and the thoughts with which the face works and plays, that it imagines these things with a tenacity all the more vivacious. Should we ever wish to do something so hasty as to capture "The Triumph of Life" with a single phrase, let that thought not be some dire epitome of meaning's last deletion, but let it rather be this one instead: "the evanescent is essential."[3]

I

It is possible to distinguish among two competing and complementary ideas about what it might be to offer a philosophical interpretation of a poem—an interpretation which does not simply ignore the fact that a poem is a particular kind of artefact which is made in a particular kind of way. The first would be to show how the pressure of the desire for verse virtuosity or delight can introduce a differend into thinking, a differend which far from being merely a constraint or an ornament, can materially and even decisively affect the semantic and syntactic substructure of the poet's fundamental ontology, the way in which, consciously or unconsciously, each poet imagines the most essential elements of the world. Pope's intense delight in compressed aphorism and in intralinear instrumentation in the *Essay on Man*, for example, in several cases leads to a situation in which apparently rationalist arguments within the supposed paraphrasable content of the *Essay* are given a decidedly skeptical significance: but this, not as a result of an elaborate hermeneutic plot on the poet's part, but as a result of the cooperative antagonism between the colliding kinds of thinking which are at work in that vitally striated poem.[4] This first mode of offering a philosophical interpretation of verse then could be briefly summarized thus: verse leaves no idea unchanged; or verse can give permission for the "wrong" idea to be thought.

But there is also a second, and more elusive, way in which one might understand the task of philosophically interpreting poems. This way is one which starts from the idea—originating most significantly in the thinking of Hegel, but given a particular kind of materialist development in T. W. Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*—that technique is the way art thinks, not only in the relatively accessible kind of case described above, in which the implicit constraints which technique places upon an explicitable practice of propositional thinking can be charted in detail, but also in the much more difficult kind of case in which there is, strictly speaking, no readily paraphrasable content at all (in the cases of music or of non-figurative painting, for examples). In the tradition I describe, it would not be the job of philosophical interpretation to extract from works of art some kind of transcendentally and transhistorically valid philosophical thesis, a thesis which the work of art would supposedly be exemplifying or illustrating, but it would instead be the task philosophically to interpret the work's *technique*—and this, precisely, on the grounds that the technical aspects of the work of art are not its least but its most intimately historical, the part which can become obsolete and ugly most rapidly, and the part which cannot but bear witness to historical experience even when the artist responsible may have wished to develop some timeless message of his or her own (Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*; Zuidervaart; Jarvis, *Adorno*).

To explore both these approaches together entails a refusal to arrange poetics and hermeneutics in a hierarchical relationship with each other. Their proper relation is an antagonistic cooperation, a relation in which conflict cannot be erased but must be allowed to speak.

Such a double approach, to such an important and still resistant poem, requires a larger space than is available here. What is offered now is only a first propaedeutic. Its goal is negative. It wants, at this stage, only to release the poem from a series of assumptions which currently capture it and our possible experiences of it. I shall offer an analysis of the extant remains of "The Triumph of Life" in which I contest both the idea that we can know that this poem represents a uniquely disenchanted, disillusioned, or disidealized text within the poet's authorship, and the idea that, were it considered thus uniquely disidealized, then this would be a reason for admiring it. The method, at this preliminary stage, is consciously myopic. I want to see what happens if we assume that Shelley, as well as creating a verse artefact of evanescing radiance, weighed his words with care: if we assume something like the opposite, that is, of the familiar view that "Shelley chooses nouns that scarcely exercise a referential function, and as a consequence his poem expresses a relativist world" (Cronin 205). I propose to see just how life and the living are mentioned, in terms, in this poem. Perhaps "[t]he poem makes sense."[5] It works through complex and ambivalent feelings, I shall suggest, about that work of verse-thinking which it executes with such matchless delicacy. The poem does not seem to want to determine whether the specifically melodic aspect of poetical thinking, whether verse, is more like an inextinguishable spark or more like a sweet narcotic. Yet this by no means permits us to consider the poem as decisively, at a larger metaphysical level, confirming any transcendentalization or quasi-transcendentalization of the spectral—as succumbing to the temptation to regard life as constitutively or structurally inextricable from death. Even should we ourselves find it less painful to be ghosts than to be souls, that doesn't entitle us to capture Shelley for the underworld. The horizon of the present temporary propaedeutic is the bare *possibility*¸ never here asserted as more than such, that Shelley, so far from wishing to accept, or even perhaps to delight in, any putatively absolute undifferentiability of life and the living from their opposites, may have been beginning to dedicate himself in this poem to their long and difficult discrimination—to what might in the end have become, in no sarcastic or merely processional sense, a triumph of life.

II

"The Triumph of Life" was once a source of perplexity to its readers. It was unfinished, obscure; it could hardly be taken for a central pillar establishing Shelley's poetic reputation. Yet it might not be true to claim that we now understand the poem much better or even any better than did its earliest readers. It is possible, in fact, that we understand it much worse—that we understand it worse, precisely in so far as, without in fact having come actually to understand it, we have long been accustomed to placing it and sorting it. There is a paradox here. This poem, a poem which is not easy to

make sense of and whose meaning has been so strongly controverted, has for some time been the most *acceptable* face of Shelley, the poem which Shelley's admirers most often name as his finest, and which even readers skeptical of his merits can be persuaded to admire.[6] Eliot was prepared to except the poem from his generally negative assessment of Shelley's work: in it, he suggested, "there is evidence not only of better writing than in any previous long poem [*sc.* 'of Shelley's'] but of greater wisdom" (90). For Leavis, the poem was "among the few things one can still read and go back to in Shelley when he has become, generally, 'almost unreadable'" (191). Such remarks prefigure much of the later reception, even though the critical presuppositions from which that reception proceeds could hardly be more different from Eliot's or Leavis's. The poem, despite the fact that no one can really be perfectly certain what it is about or what it might have gone on to say or to narrate, is regularly regarded as the one in which, more than in any other, Shelley was for once able to shed infantile or immature ideals and illusions. The most extreme and most powerful statements of this view come, of course, in de Man's "Shelley Disfigured." But even where de Man's approach is not followed, "The Triumph of Life" is taken as a singularly disillusioned piece of work. For Paul Hamilton, this is a poem of "horrific honesty." "This is what life looks like purified of all consoling ideologies, bleached of all selfish constructions … ." The poem's "pessimistic materialism" recalls Leopardi's (Hamilton, *Shelley* 184).[7] In a recent essay, Hamilton refers to the poem's "destructive poetics" ("Poetics" 182). For Neil Arditi the poem is "stunningly bleak" (142).[8] Even in a reading such as Arkady Plotnitsky's, which understands the poem as "an affirmation of life even in its most tragic aspects," what is to be affirmed is radically disenchanted: "[n]othing is immortal anymore: neither light nor poetry; neither the body nor the spirit; neither gods we can conceive of nor gods whom we can postulate as beyond any conception" (163). Even a reading such as Stuart Sperry's, which takes Shelley for "one of the great visionary idealists of world literature" (ix), can nevertheless refer in passing on the next page to "the fatalism and darkness of *The Triumph of Life*" (x).[9]

In my view it is a little surprising to see how marginal the bare fact of the poem's being unfinished has been allowed to become for the purposes of professional interpretation. The fact is usually admitted, and then put to one side. But much of the poem is narrated, it will be remembered, by a "grim Feature" who represents part of what was once Rousseau.[10] The Feature itself declares its own perspective corrupted. Few contemporary readers would have missed the allusion to *Paradise Lost*, in which Death is described as a "grim Feature," scenting "the smell / Of mortal change on Earth" (IX, 279, 274–75). So to call this part of what was once Rousseau a grim Feature is to seem to appoint Death as chief hermeneut of Life. In this context, the fact of the poem's being unfinished greatly exacerbates the difficulty of knowing just how we are to take the grim Feature's report. Yet this incompletion by no means confers on us the right to take the poem as

a decisive refusal of the very possibilities of meaning or of interpretation, because it is by no means certain that Shelley might not have found a way of finishing it, had he lived.

This leads on to a further reflection. Eliot admired the poem because he thought it showed qualities of verse writing and thinking rare in Shelley's work. The high value now placed upon the poem, though, rests almost entirely on the unflinching refusal of idealism and even the refusal of meaning which it is held to embody, even though it is hard to see how anyone could be certain that it does embody these things. That is to say, the value now placed upon the poem depends almost entirely on a supposed theme or message or position which it adopts: it depends on this almost impossibly inaccessible kernel and discards just that which is not only accessible but which can hardly be overlooked, the poem's unparalleled brilliance of verse composition.

III

One of the most important exceptions to this rule is the work of William Keach.[11] In the chapter on "The Triumph of Life" in his classic study of *Shelley's Style*, Keach takes Shelley's rhymes for a kind of counter-Nepenthe. Even as the grim Feature is narrating oblivion upon oblivion, Shelley's rhymes would be remembering back. "Forgetting, obliteration and erasure," Keach finely writes, "are powerful forces in *The Triumph of Life*. But the articulation of those forces depends upon the counterforces of remembering, literation and repetition" (192).[12] The poem is not itself wholly mute or blank. That the story of forgetting can be told at all already depends on something's being remembered about how that forgetting happened, a possibility of recollection whose condition Keach locates above all in a central feature of Shelley's verse composition, its rhyming practice.

There is always a risk in specifying the supposed thematic force of non-paraphrasable features of an artwork, the risk of allowing these features to have that force which is convenient to one's interpretation. In particular, there is a risk that "form" will be asked implicitly to keep warm those metaphysics which the poem itself is assumed explicitly to deny. So Keach's attractive argument calls for further enquiry. In attempting to ask about the relationship between the poem's organization as verse, and the arguments or stories which it articulates, one starting point might be that the poem itself contains, not merely metapoetical, but what one might call specifically metaprosodic, passages, passages which are themselves cruces in any attempt to work out what the poem is about. The most famous of these is that in which the grim Feature briefly invites the poet to consider the ancient poets, the "bards of old":

> See the great bards of old who inly quelled
> "The passions which they sung, as by their strain

> May well be known: their living melody
> Tempers its own contagion to the vein
>
> "Of those who are infected with it—I
> Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!—
>
> "And so my words were seeds of misery—
> Even as the deeds of others."— (274–81)

This passage has been endlessly discussed, but it still is not entirely clear what it means.[13] As it stands, it is organized around a contrast between the grim Feature and the poets which only emerges in the course of revision. What was once Rousseau insists that he actually experienced what he wrote about. The implication is that he thinks that the poets didn't. But that contrast did not pertain in the first drafting remaining to us, in which it is "they," the poets, who "[h]ave suffered what they paint"; and the contrast in any case retrospectively simplifies what had been said about the poets to begin with (Reiman, *BSM* 193). That they "inly quelled" the passions which they sung didn't imply that they didn't feel those passions, only that they were able to master them. The syntax, indeed, suggests that they quelled them precisely by singing them, because the Feature doesn't say that the poets sang *about* their passions, but that they transitively "sung" them. They do not first quell their passion and then sing a little representation of it, but rather quell and sing the same passion. How do we know that they did this? From their "strain": their music or their burden. This "strain," this music, the Feature itself insists, is a "living melody." The phrase is crossed out in the manuscript; but its apparent replacement is near illegible (Reiman conjectures [?soft] [?tune]) and does not, unlike "melody," provide even an imperfect rhyme.[14]

"Living melody," then, seems to be both deleted and indispensable. It sounds unremarkable to us. It's the kind of phrase we've probably all seen on the back of a compact disc case. But it takes on a specific force in a poem which narrates the triumph of "Life." If we look at how Life has been represented so far in the poem, it seems fairly clear that Life itself is not alive. The car in its triumph is driven by a figure that only seems to have a face. The only appearance of the word itself in this poem so far, apart from its appearance in the title, could hardly be more spectral than it is: "Life" is the first word uttered by what the poet has previously thought to be an old root with a bit of grass on it, and it is at the precise instant of the uttering of this word, "Life," that the poet realizes that this seeming root and seeming grass are in fact part of what either is or has once been a face. "But a voice answered. 'Life' … I turned & knew." The recognition cuts through any moment of epistemological hesitation. The poet does not spend time any wondering whether this is a duck or a rabbit, but "knows" right away that it is a face or what used to be a face, and knows this, the line implies, precisely because the face has uttered this word, "Life." Yet the poem is very careful not to say that what looked like a grassy root has now instead proved itself to be alive.

It has, rather, proved itself to be phantasmal, and to be willing to offer its ghostly services as cicerone to the phantasmagoria which it has just named as "Life." It is at least clear that, to recall the terms of Shelley's prose fragment on life, this triumph is not, so far, the apprehension of life but the loss of it: the triumph of living on.

In a poem which is so evidently about life, then, the poets' "melody" is not described as "living" just by default. The poem elsewhere takes great care with the word "living." It is used in strict opposition to the phantasmal. At 113, this pageant of phantoms is compared to the historical Roman triumph: "As when … Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea." This ghostly pageant is compared to that one, one which was made up of living individuals. That was a living sea; this one is not. A little later the poet names, as exceptions to the rule that everyone is made captive to the pageant,

> the sacred few who could not tame
> Their spirits to the Conqueror, but as soon
> As they had touched the world with living flame
>
> Fled back like eagles to their native noon, (128–31)

These untameable spirits touch this world of shadows with a "living" flame. What they have not been willing or able to subject to the conqueror Life is, precisely, their being alive. These are the two uses of the word "living" in the poem preceding the Feature's speaking of the poets' melody as a "living" one.

If it is clear, however, that the description of poetic melody as "living" is not casual, that does not yet specify what it does mean. But one clue does come with the still more saturated word "[t]empers."[15] This word is used several times in this poem. At the beginning of the poem, the birds "tempered their matin lay" to the sound of the sea, in the sense that they attune their song to it. A little later a "dun and faint etherial gloom" just above what only "seemed the head" of the charioteer is described as "[t]empering the light" in the sense that it modifies or mingles with the light. Just before the passage we are considering, what was once Rousseau contrasts himself with the strange quintet of Voltaire, Kant, Leopold the Great, Catherine the Great, and Frederick of Prussia by saying that each of these persons was overcome by life, whereas he, Rousseau, was overcome by his own heart alone, a heart which nothing "could temper to its object." This is a more complex use of the word. Rousseau's heart couldn't be hardened in the right way to life; or, or also, it couldn't be attuned in the right way to life.

This final use, then, suggests that we are to read the tempering of the poets' living melody as another aspect of the contrast with the grim Feature himself. They can and do temper their aliveness, whereas he couldn't. But this result is itself complicated when we ask just what the poets' living melody is tempered *to*. The answer is the obscurest thing about this passage. It "tempers its own contagion to the vein / Of those who are infected with it."

What kind of disease is this, exactly, and who exactly suffers from it? The living melody tempers, that is, it adjusts, modifies, or attunes its own contagion, presumably so that more people shall get sick, and so that the lines will proliferate, will be in everyone's head and on everyone's lips. It makes these adjustments in order to contaminate those who are already infected with it, but the people making the adjustments are infected too. When I infect you with poetry, it doesn't, luckily or unluckily, mean that my own condition miraculously clears up.[16]

Whether this is a good or a bad thing depends on whether you like poetry or not. The grim Feature's presentation of the poets remains strikingly ambivalent. The poets, however "great," have to get in line with the rest, with the despots, spoilers, and metaphysicians. All are distinguished in the Feature's mind, if we can call it that, from itself, because it has not been overcome by Life, it claims, but by its own heart. Yet it is never quite clear what difference this makes, or even how much credence the poet gives to this supposed distinction because the Feature is by no means claiming not to have been overcome or not to have been extinguished, quite the reverse. That the grim Feature insists quite so much on this difference makes one almost think that the poem is treating this obstinacy as a last remnant of narcissism even on this evidently disfigured Feature's part.

Whether or not the grim Feature likes poetry, and whether or not the poem goes along with its view, this point is the ground of a further contrast between his own fate and that of the poets. The Feature suffered the vile pangs he wrote. The poets, he only now seems to imply, did not, or, if they did, they modified them. The Feature thinks that this has had a particular result: its words were seeds of misery, even as the deeds of others. But this antithesis—"And so my words were seeds of misery— / Even as the deeds of others"—is a fragile artefact. The first line appears on the recto of leaf 33 of the manuscript, the second on the verso of leaf 37; and what separates them is not only some drafting for other compositions altogether, but a whole passage of deleted drafting for this poem. In this deleted drafting the poet answers back to Rousseau with what seems to be an objection to his lumping the poets in with the despots and philosophers: an especially important deleted line is "These the creators, the destroyers those," which is then repeated varied but still deleted at the top of 37v: "These the creators, the destroyers they." When it is finally incorporated into the poem this opposition between creating and destroying is given not to the poet but to the grim Feature—the despots' power was given to destroy, but what was once Rousseau was "one of those who have created" (294).

The "deeds of others" seems unlikely to refer to the poets, and more likely to refer back to Napoleon, Leopold, and other adventurous and despotic sorts. But there is still an implied contrast here. The former Rousseau's words were seeds of misery, but perhaps the poets' were not, just in so far as they were modified, and modified in order to infect others. Rousseau's words were seeds of misery, but perhaps the poets' words were, instead, each lying *like* a corpse within its

grave, ready to quicken a new birth. It seems likely that the grim Feature is rating his own earlier works amongst the sorts of books which Wordsworth, in his "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*, considered to be too painful to endure because written in prose, works such as *Clarissa* and "The Gamester" (755). And this would also retrospectively temper our reading of what has come before. It is specifically the "living melody" of the poets which tempers its own contagion in a way which Rousseau, the Feature claims, proved unable to do: that is, not just the poets' work in general, their poems, but their work as melodious, as metrical and rhythmic and rhyming and lyrical, their work as *verse*.

IV

Here I want to suggest that the poem's most important intertext is another of Shelley's poems in *terza rima*, or, rather, in a modified form of *terza rima*, his "Ode to the West Wind." Not only is that whole poem, and especially its final section, saturated with connections to "The Triumph of Life," but the connections are of that intimately lexical kind which makes them essential, rather than merely possible, in the case of a poet. How is this living melody, which the disfigured Rousseau ascribes to the poets, opposed or connected to the "dead thoughts" which Shelley commends to the West Wind at the end of his Ode?

> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
> And, by the incantation of this verse,
>
> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words, among mankind!
> Be through my lips to unawakened earth
>
> The trumpet of a prophecy! O, wind,
> If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? (192).

The thoughts are "dead"; they are now lifeless ink, written and then printed. The west wind is to drive them everywhere, but the mechanism by which it is to do this is contained in the poem itself, "the incantation of this verse." "By," in fact, is ambiguous here. The primary meaning must be "west wind, please distribute my thoughts, and do it by means of the incantation of this verse." But the line could also be invoking verse as a tutelary deity: "By the Power of Verse, I hereby call upon the west wind to distribute my thoughts." The line raises the ghost of a performative. It is the specifically melodic element of poetry, the verse, which is its last remaining site of efficacity. Adorno once called music "demythologized prayer, freed from the magic of efficacity" (Adorno, "Fragment" 252).[17] The "Ode to the West Wind" is a prayer from which all superstitious belief in prayer's efficacity has been radically

removed. All that is left of prayer's efficacity is the sounding gesture of lyric address itself—yet a gesture at once how forcefully constructed, how delicately instrumented, and how vulnerably foregrounded! The poet spends three whole metastanzas working up to try to give the west wind what we are likely to begin to think, given how long it is taking for the poet to spit it out, must be a very important request or set of instructions indeed, only to collapse instead, in the fourth, into a rather dejected story about himself. Only in the final section does imperative after imperative at last issue from the poet, but their content is almost wholly vacated, pertaining largely to the dissemination of the present poem itself.

How much more free from illusion do we wish Shelley to become? Unless, perhaps, we believe that the very facts of verse composition and of Shelley's intense attachment to verse composition themselves constitute illusions: unless we believe that freedom from illusion must compulsorily be expressed in prose: unless we believe that to be free from illusion we must also be free from wonder?

Allusion to the "Ode" is crucial for "The Triumph." What twice recurs with especial prominence is the motif of a dying or buried fire which can be requickened (Pyle, "Kindling and Ash"). The grim Feature is hardly so unflinching in his perspective as he is sometimes thought to be, because after an initially frank look at his own corruptedness, he turns out to be willing to console himself with a thought which is almost precisely the poet's wish at the end of the Ode: "If I have been extinguished," he says, "yet there rise / A thousand beacons from the spark I bore" (206–07). This is what makes the second appearance of buried fire in the poem all the more inauspicious. The "shape all light" who goes scattering Nepenthe is made to be deeply delicious. The grim Feature's evocation of forgetting is a conspicuous instance of ambivalence, because this oblivion is represented simultaneously as bringing an end to all pain and pleasure, as bringing total affective neutrality, and yet, at the same time, over and over again, as "sweet," a word which recurs at near-Swinburnean frequencies in this part of the poem. Readers will probably begin to feel enjoyably lulled themselves, but it is not long before the bill for this narcotic begins to be presented. Shelley's instrumentation, the entire Osip Brik repertoire of little phonetic echoes, chiasmuses, intercalations, and mutations is at its most saturated in this part of the poem.

But the poem also uses these traps for attention to deliver an understated alarm call to any reader whose brain has not yet become as sand. One of Shelley's most conspicuously delicious lines, "O'er lily-paven lakes mid silver mist," is a marked allusion to a line from an only superficially surprising source: Pope's four-book *Dunciad*. In the last book of that poem, Pope offers a virtuosic mockery of virtuosi, including a verse evaporation of a young Grand Tourist which works by loading every rift with just a little too much ore. Among that young man's travellings are journeys "To Isles of fragrance, lilly-silver'd vales" (Pope 312; IV: 303).[18] Shelley's echo of Pope's

instrumentation is too exact to be accidental, right down to the repetition of Pope's phonetic chiasmus between the "li" in "lily" and the "il" in "silver." The allusion is a delicate hint to the reader that, while Nepenthe may suppress pain and anxiety, it can also lead to lasting brain changes. Nepenthe isn't all sweet and lovely at all, because you wake up with your thoughts extinguished, and "with nothing but a Solo in your head." Michael O'Neill refers, in a recent essay, to the "sardonic flick" of Shelley's phrase "Actor or victim," and this phrase captures what I find most missing from most existing appreciations of the poem: its command, in the midst of all tender or grand tremblings or pageantry, of a sharp urbanity schooled in Pope (O'Neill 406).[19]

This hint is confirmed most of all by what we next glimpse "the shape all light" doing:

> "And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
> To which they moved, seemed as they moved, to blot
> The thoughts of him who gazed on them, & soon
>
> "All that was seemed as if it had been not,
> As if the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
> Her feet like embers, & she, thought by thought,
>
> "Trampled its fires into the dust of death,
> As Day upon the threshold of the east
> Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath
>
> "Of darkness reillumines even the least
> Of heaven's living eyes—like day she came,
> Making the night a dream;" (382–93)

We need to keep our eyes on the feet here. Earlier on (370–71) their touch has been so light that they have been half-walking, half-floating. Their track has seemed effortless, unself-conscious. Now contrast that with what we have in the second part of this passage. Embers—ashes and sparks of just the sort which the west wind was, with the assistance of verse incantation, to scatter across the universe—are being put out, with the most deliberate and decisive of tramples, one by one, "thought by thought." It's not so much an increasing violence, as Paul de Man thinks, which is frightening here, as a methodicalness: the deliberated and separate extinguishing of each individual thought. It is very clear what Shelley's verse-mind is thinking here, underneath the story told by the corrupted Rousseau. The "shape all light" is the opposite of the west wind. The shape puts out those sparks the wind would scatter.

And it's just here, of course, that we are forced back, not so much upon the metapoetical content of the poem, as upon its metaprosodic content. That these "feet" are also metrical feet has long been noticed, but its significance has sometimes been suppressed. De Man suggests that "since measure is any principle of linguistic organization, not only as rhyme and meter but as any

syntactical or grammatical scansion, one can read 'feet' not just as the poetic meter that is so conspicuously evident in the *terza rima* of the poem, but as any principle of signification" (113). This somersault might just, if one were to go along with it, show that we can read "measure" as any principle of signification, but it can't do the same for the word "feet." It so evidently can't, that one can't not suspect a conscious or unconscious wish on de Man's part to obliviate the metrical here, to dissolve this allusion which is specifically to feet and to the dances from which the metrical term "foot" derives, into a more abstract invocation of linguistic organization as such. But what is more disablingly missing here is the crucial intertext, the conclusion of the "Ode to the West Wind." The poet's clear signal, there, that verse itself is what must efficaciously reanimate thought, makes it impossible not to hear these feet, in this passage so clearly twinned with that one, as specifically metrical ones. Just look at the gait of the shape's feet on the second occasion when they are mentioned: "And her feet ever to the ceaseless song / Of leaves & winds & waves & birds & bees" (375–76). The second line comically carves itself into a metrical diagram of five standard-issue iambs.

Yet it's precisely this that might then lead us a little to qualify William Keach's resonant rejoinder to de Man, the rejoinder which says that the poem's form mutely remembers even if its paraphrasable content might be driving toward ever more final erasure. If there's a venerable tradition which takes metre and especially rhyme as exemplary memory machines, there's another equally venerable one which understands them as potions or anaesthetics or Nepenthes. "The Triumph of Life" may perhaps remain undecidably ambivalent about whether verse really is a life-increaser or a life-obliviator. Shelley crossed "living melody" out, yet it still stands there in our texts. Shelley is a poet at once continuously committed to skeptical self-scrutiny and at the same time most intimately and irrevocably invested in meter, rhythm, and rhyme. For this reason he would have been likely in practice to have had a very complex range of ambivalent feelings toward verse composition, a spectrum running all the way from love to loathing. A philosophical poet (if one does not agree with Eliot that such an entity is better distributed among two skulls) is especially likely to be acutely aware that meter, rhythm, and rhyme are at once constraints upon thinking and generators of it.[20] Panic at the thought that the incantatory power of verse might be turning you stupid, that addiction to verse melody might be a mind-erasing drug, is an occupational hazard—just as is, on the other side, the fear that your subtlest and most complex powers of reflection and ratiocination may be making your verse bray like a donkey.

V

I should like to propose the bare possibility of an alternative interpretation. Shelley's prose fragment on life is above all concerned with the way in which

wonder—in the first and founding instance, astonishment that there is anything at all and not nothing—is gradually blocked, covered over, suppressed. Commentary on "The Triumph of Life" has sometimes proceeded as though this trajectory from wonder to habit could be mapped on to all the others: has proceeded as though the path from wonder to habit were homologous with that from enchantment to disenchantment, and from illusion to disillusion. Yet this may, instead, be incommensurable with those. In all of these other cases it can be argued that we are indeed learning something, as well as losing something. If you want to begin learning about the structure of the atom, it can be helpful, even if it is not absolutely necessary, to stop believing in fairies first. But when you cease to find it remarkable that anything at all exists and not nothing, you have not learned anything at all. You have made no intellectual progress of any kind. On the contrary, what you have done is to suppress an essential question, on the grounds that the question is too difficult to entertain and that it will cause you a great deal of discomfort and inconvenience if you try. "The Triumph of Life," I want to suggest, is sharply alert to this difference, so often blurred: the radical difference between the path which leads from enchantment to disenchantment, and that which leads from wonder to oblivion. If there were, as several commentators have suggested, to be a "materialism" implied in this poem, it could not be of that kind which consists in the extinction of wonder, but only of that kind which at least partly consists in wonder's reanimation. In no true materialism is the trembling of an eyelid meaningless.[21]

We cannot be certain, then, that this is the poem in which Shelley at last accomplishes disenchantment, in which he divests himself of illusions, and demonstrates his unflinching honesty, uncompromising pessimism, or even nihilism. The correct response to any such certainty is the simplest one: we just can't know that, because the poem isn't finished. There simply is nothing in the poem from which we can be certain that it would have confirmed a view that oblivion, erasure and meaninglessness are final. We can't exhaustively know what the poet's view of the Feature's story is, but we can know that there are many clear indicators that Grim is a damaged reporter. Meanwhile, the intensity of the need to believe this about this poem, to believe, even when we couldn't possibly demonstrate, that it in particular is the composition in which Shelley at last came to surrender all his illusions and became a pessimist, a metaphysical materialist, or a nihilist, should show us that we are doing anything but finding something "unsettling" when we read the poem in this way. We are, on the contrary, getting right back on the Nepenthe ourselves, because we are using Shelley to help confirm that rubric of obligatory disidealization which stands over the long flight of the true, the good and the beautiful away from our polities, and which would instead have those three transcendentals nestle down cosily in our menus of private options (Rose *Hegel* and *The Broken Middle*). We loathe "beautiful idealisms of moral excellence" (Shelley 475). We no more think, now, that it is decent for a poet to speak of such idealisms than we would allow her to

tell us how to arrange the furniture in our own living rooms. Shelley, however, would have scorned to blame an ideal for his own failure to live up to it; and there is no good reason not to think that "The Triumph of Life," instead of being, uniquely in his authorship, a machine for the deletion of meaning, is, like many of his other poems, a verse prophylactic against the habitual diminution of wonder.

NOTES

1. Epigraph: "'Alas I kiss you [?]' was printed in an extremely fine hand after the quill had been sharpened (probably after '*limbs the*' below); the word *SN* [i.e. Matthews] reads as 'Jane' I believe to be 'Julie': at least there seem to me to be five rather than four letters, two of which rise above the level of the others" (Reiman, *Shelley's "Triumph of Life"* 211). Line references to "The Triumph of Life" are keyed to Reiman's text. I thank Sophie Laniel and Thomas Constantinesco for the opportunity to give that lecture in Lille which forms the distant ancestor of this chapter. Since the lecture was given, Wilson's *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life* has appeared. This essay attempts to walk a little further (back) along the paths opened up by that important study. I'm grateful to Anne Stillman for reading this poem with me.
2. "Limits" seems to have come first:

   When ~~on~~ on the ~~boun limits~~
   ~~limits of the day and [n]~~
   sunlit limits of the night

   (Reiman 1986, 149)
3. Condensed from Hegel 39: "Das Verschwindende ist vielmehr selbst als wesentlich zu betrachten …"
4. For some attempts along these lines, see Jarvis *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, "Bedlam or Parnassus," and "What Is Historical Poetics?". For an approach to Coleridge which powerfully illuminates the relationship between verse and philosophy, see Jones.
5. This sentence occurs at 155 in Duffy, still one of the most useful aids to an understanding of the poem.
6. Donald Reiman recalls a teacher of his, what must now be more than half a century ago, as having already insisted that "Anyone wishing to defend Shelley's poetry must begin with 'The Triumph of Life'" (*Shelley's "Triumph of Life"* viii).
7. Hamilton sets out his case for the poem's materialism ("A French Connection" 193). Shelley learns from Mary, and this is what "enables his materialism to reach its apogee as do so many things Shelleyan in … *The Triumph of Life*." Compare Hamilton, *Metaromanticism* 139–56. Forest Pyle regards the poem as making "a *materialist* break" (emphasis Pyle's) within Shelley's thinking, but one that is proto-Althusserian: "Shelley's poetry and prose come to name in the most challenging form available the *ineliminability* of ideology from representation" ("Shelley" 98, 97).
8. Unusually, however, Arditi argues that this putative bleakness need not be a reason for considering the poem superior to others of Shelley's (142–43).
9. But cf. Sperry, 200: "[b]efore committing oneself to viewing the fragment as the expression of a final and despairing pessimism, one would do well to recollect

how protractedly optimism and hopelessness, affirmation and negation struggle throughout Shelley's verse."

10. As Faflak emphasizes: "he is 'what was once Rousseau'" (55); "Rousseau indicates that age and wisdom rarely correspond and that the Narrator might in fact be smarter than Rousseau" (59–60).
11. There are others, of course. Stuart Sperry (184) detects in the poem's prologue a "striking and elusive" tone which is part of the "evidence of a new stylistic level of achievement" in the poem. See also Cronin; Ravinthiran.
12. Also quoted in Wilson, "Shelley's Sounds of Air" 114, and see Wilson's discussion.
13. For some previous discussions, see Bloom 261, Rajan 332–34; and, especially, Wilson, *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life* 160–65.
14. Ibid. For Reiman's justification of his text, see Reiman, *Shelley's "Triumph of Life"* 173.
15. A. C. Bradley first noted Shelley's fondness for this word, and connected this to its frequent appearance in Italian poetry (450–51). Ravinthiran, in a subtle and complex discussion, adds (160) a further possible source in *Paradiso* xxi. But the word also plays a crucial role in *Paradise Lost* (e.g. I: 552; VII: 15) along with "distemper" (X: 53, 56); compare also "Of Education," 409–11 (in Sirluck, 357–415): both terms, in Milton, tend to name the difficulty of accommodating human capacities or passions to more than human matters.
16. Contagion "is never anyone's in particular," as Ross Wilson notes, and "Shelley is fond of deploying the word 'own' … in contexts where it is acutely undecided whose 'own' it is"(Wilson, *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life* 162). Ravinthiran (169) makes an attractive case that Shelley's use of the word might be recalling a passage from Young's *Conjectures upon Original Composition.*
17. "Sie ist entmythologiertes Gebet, befreit von der Magie des Einwirkens."
18. One of the very few critics to pay any attention to the important links with Pope's verse and especially with *The Dunciad* in this poem is Richard Cronin, who notes that "[a] characteristic verbal device of the poem merges the many with the one … [i]n *The Triumph of Life* the device works rather as Pope uses it in *The Dunciad*: 'lo! one vast egg produces human race'" (220–21).
19. An important discussion of "urbanity" in Shelley is Davie. It is essential at least to signal here the importance of Petrarch's *Triumphus Cupidinis* to Shelley's poem. Little more is usually made of it than a brief mention and an assertion that Dante is, despite Shelley's title, the more important presence. This may underrate Petrarch as a source for just the kind of note caught by O'Neill here: the insignificance of the individual and its options, caught in a process much stronger and larger than it. Petrarch's *elenco* of wretched lovers can repeatedly compress their fate into a line or two, a line that can as often sound mocking at the same time as it sounds elegiac or tragic, so that each of the first two sections can, for example, end with what could either be a bathos or an anagnorisis: "e d'un pomo beffata al fin Cydippe" (128; II: 187) ["and, last, Cydippe, taken in by an apple"] or, still more powerfully, "e di lacciuoli innumerabil carco / vèn catenato Giove inanzi al carro" (90; I: 159–60) ["and, imprisoned in innumerable fetters, Jove was chained before the chariot"]—where the rhyming on varco/Varro/carco/carro produces almost the illusion of a pair of couplets sardonically to close off the *terza rima* just where it is revealed that the chief of all the gods is no less helpless in the face of desire than any other spirit.

20. Eliot (98–99): "I believe that for a poet to be also a philosopher he would have to be virtually two men; I cannot think of any example of this thorough schizophrenia, nor can I see anything to be gained by it: the work is better performed inside two skulls than one."
21. For this reason, I should not want to deny the possibility that the poem has an affinity with materialism, but should, instead, want to suggest that any materialism toward which it might point could not possibly be of that metaphysical kind that insists on the immediate acceptance of a certain series of cosmological or anthropological dogmas, e.g. that "everything is matter." It could not, in the end, for example, be a materialism in which "we let mortality and the primacy of physical organization dictate our common possibilities for happiness" (Hamilton, "A French Connection" 192). For more detailed argument in favor of the non-dogmatic materialism invoked here, see Adorno *Negative Dialektik* and the interpretation in Jarvis *Adorno* and "Adorno, Marx, Materialism"; together with Henry *Marx* and *Phénoménologie matérielle*, with the interpretation in Jarvis "Michel Henry's Concept of Life."

WORKS CITED

Adorno, T. W. *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970. Print.

———. "Fragment über Musk und Sprache." *Gesammelte Schriften* 16. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978. Print.

———. *Negative Dialektik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966. Print.

Arditi, Neil. "T.S. Eliot and *The Triumph of Life*." *Keats-Shelley Journal* 50 (2001): 124–43. Print.

Baudelaire, Charles. "À celle qui est trop gaie." *Les Fleurs du Mal*. 1857. Trans. Richard Howard. Brighton, UK: Harvester, 1982. 224. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *Shelley's Mythmaking*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1959. Print.

Bradley, A. C. "Notes on Shelley's 'Triumph of Life'." *Modern Language Review* 9. 4 (1914): 441–56. Print.

Brik, Osip. "Zvukovye Povtory" ["Sound Repetitions"]. *Two Essays on Poetic Language*. Michigan Slavic Materials 5 (1964): 1–45. Print.

Cronin, Richard. *Shelley's Poetic Thoughts*. London: Macmillan, 1981. Print.

Davie, Donald. *Purity of Diction in English Verse*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967. Print.

de Man, Paul. "Shelley Disfigured." *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1984. 93–123. Print.

Duffy, Edward. *Rousseau in England: The Context for Shelley's Critique of Enlightenment*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1979. Print.

Eliot, T. S. "Shelley and Keats." *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England*. London: Faber and Faber, 1933. 87–102. Print.

Faflak, Joel. "The Difficult Education of Shelley's 'Triumph of Life'." *Keats-Shelley Journal* 58 (2009): 53–78. Print.

Hamilton, Paul. "A French Connection: From Empiricism to Materialism in Writings by the Shelleys." *Colloquium Helveticum* 25 (1997): 171–93. Print.

———. *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Print.

———. "Poetics." *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* Eds. Michael O'Neill and Anthony Howe. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. 177–92. Print.
———. *Shelley.* Tavistock: Northcote House in Association with the British Council, 2000. Print.
Hegel, G. W. F. *Phänomenologie des Geistes.* 1807. Ed. Johannes Hoffmeister. Hamburg: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1952. Print.
Henry, Michel. *Marx.* 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1976. Print.
———. *Phénoménologie matérielle.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990. Print.
Jarvis, Simon. *Adorno: A Critical Introduction.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998. Print.
———. "Adorno, Marx, Materialism." *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno.* Ed. Tom Huhn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 79–100. Print.
———. "Bedlam or Parnassus: The Verse Idea." *Metaphilosophy* 43.1–2 (Jan. 2012): 71–81. Print.
———. "Michel Henry's Concept of Life." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17.3 (2009): 361–75. Print.
———. "What Is Historical Poetics?" *Theory Aside.* Eds. Jason Potts and Daniel Stout. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014. 97–116. Print.
———. *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.
Jones, Ewan James. *Coleridge and the Philosophy of Poetic Form.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014. Print.
Leavis, F. R. "Shelley." *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry.* Harmondsworth, UK: Peregrine Books, 1964. 170–98. Print.
Matthews, G. M. "'The Triumph of Life': A New Text." *Studia Neophilologica* 32.2 (1960): 271–309. Print.
Milton, John. *Of Education. Complete Prose Works.* 1644. Ed. Ernest Sirluck. Vol. 2. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1959. 357–415. Print.
———. *Paradise Lost.* 1667. Menston: Scolar Press, 1968. Print.
O'Neill, Michael. "Shelley's Pronouns." *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* Eds. O'Neill and Anthony Howe. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. 391–407. Print.
Petrarca, Francesco. "Triumphus Cupidinis, I, II, III, IV." *Trionfi, Rime Estravaganze, Codice degli Abbozzi.* 1374. Eds. Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino. Milano: Mondadori, 1996. Print.
Plotnitsky, Arkady. "Beyond the Inconsumable: The Catastrophic Sublime and the Destruction of Literature in Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion* and Shelley's *The Triumph of Life.*" *Cultures of Taste / Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism.* Ed. Timothy Morton. New York and Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 161–80. Print.
Pope, Alexander. *The Four-Book Dunciad.* 1744. Ed. Valerie Rumbold. London: Longman, 1999. Print.
———. *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems.* 1714. Ed. Geoffrey Tillotson. London: Methuen and New Haven: Yale UP, 1962. Print.
Pyle, Forest. "Shelley: The Ends of Imagination, The 'Triumph' of Ideology." *The Ideology of Imagination: Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism.* Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995. 94–128. Print.
———. "Kindling and Ash: Radical Aestheticism in Keats and Shelley." *Studies in Romanticism* 42.4 (2003): 427–59. Print.
Rajan, Tillotama. *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990. Print.

Ravinthiran, Vidyan. "Dante and Shelley's *Terza Rima*." *Essays in Criticism* 61.2 (2011): 155–71. Print.

Reiman, Donald, ed. [*BSM*] *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*. Vol. 1. New York: Garland, 1986. Print.

———. *Shelley's "The Triumph of Life": A Critical Study*. New York: Octagon Books, 1979. Print.

Rose, Gillian. *The Broken Middle. Out of our Ancient Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. Print.

———. *Hegel contra Sociology*. London: Athlone, 1981. Print.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Ode to the West Wind." *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts, with other Poems*. London: C and J Ollier, 1820. 189–92. Print.

———. "Preface to *Prometheus Bound*." *The Poems of Shelley*. 1820. Eds. Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews. Vol. 2. London: Longman, 2000. 472–76. Print.

Sperry, Stuart. *Shelley's Major Verse: The Narrative and Dramatic Poetry*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988. Print.

Wilson, Ross. *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. Print.

———. "Shelley's Sounds of Air." *Thinking Verse* 1 (2011). Web. 4 Sept. 2014. http://www.thinkingverse.com/issue01/Ross%20Wilson,%20Shelley's%20Sounds%20of%20Air.pdf.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*." *"Lyrical Ballads," and Other Poems, 1797–1800*. 1800. Eds. James Butler and Karen Green. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1992. 740–65. Print.

Zuidervaart, Lambert. *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991. Print.

6 Wordsworth's Thinking Places

Pascale Guibert

"Let no one who is not a geometer enter here," ordered Plato at the gates of "the best" city.[1]

The "true politics" of Plato's city, "the well-founded *politeia*, … is philosophy itself," explains Badiou in the *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (31/16). And philosophy, after Plato, rises violently against poetry. This is how it defines its political character. Badiou sees in this violent banishment of poetry not only "a constitutive gesture of philosophy," but also, at the same time, the sign of the power of poetry, in its nonsubjection to philosophy. Hence, in the two essays opening the *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, "Art and Philosophy" and "What is a Poem? Or, Philosophy and Poetry at the Point of the Unnamable," this banishment is taken most seriously. Intending, above all, to "keep intact the incisive character" of Plato's statement (31/16), the contemporary philosopher posits and examines, in front of the "violence of the Platonic text" (32/17) "the irrepressible power" that the poem develops on its own. Now focalizing on the "intraphilosophical effects" of "some works of art" (epigraph, n.p.), Badiou explores what he had already asserted in *Being and Event* (1988, trans. 2005) and then in *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (1997, trans. 2000): the poem, like the matheme, each according to its own expressive constraints, are two "post-evental" "truth procedures." (25/12, 21/9). "Truths are artistic, scientific, amorous, or political, and not philosophical," writes Badiou. Philosophy comes after. Always later, and behind: "Philosophy is the go-between in our encounter with truths, the procuress of truth." (21/10)

Just before Wordsworth started writing, in the second half of the eighteenth century, in Britain, to say it very quickly, poetry had undergone a process of decline. The fact that the widely read pages of journals and magazines were full of rhymers' lines,[2] exuding common sense and good feelings, has nothing to do with the question of the "genuine poetry"[3] that, with Wordsworth and Badiou, is going to be discussed here so as to analyze the relationships which it creates with philosophy. Many poetic forms had been lost, since the end of the seventeeth century.[4] Besides, and it is obviously linked, the value accorded to poetry in matters of edification, knowledge, and truth had been waning for almost a century.[5]

Yet, in the Britain of the 1790s, the flow of history is inflected, expansionist Britain turns back upon itself, and the course of poetry is given a new turn (Curran 14). With Wordsworth and the British Romantics, immediately following the revival of lost forms in the many collections published between the 1780s and the 1810s, poetry recovers something of its pre-Enlightenment status. It draws from the ancient recovered forms some of their power, in their function as dispensers of truth. But it shapes these forms anew, redefining itself—its modes, its subjects and its aims—in the process. This is the reason why Wordsworth can write confidently, in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: "From such verses [i.e. the contemporary verses] the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy purpose" (§7, 291). This "purpose," in the qualities of permanence, universality, and essentiality attached to it by Wordsworth in the sixth paragraph of the Preface, is obviously truth (§6, 287–88). Which takes us far from the empty enjoyment and gratuitous satisfaction more and more expected from poetry since the age of Bacon.[6] The truth that Wordsworth's "genuine poetry" wishes to communicate, covers the fields of both the natural philosopher (hence Wordsworth's readiness to work "at [the] side" of "the Man of Science" 1802 addendum to the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 302) and the philosopher unqualified, as it concerns Man and Nature.

If the domains of natural philosophy, philosophy and poetry, which had been gradually pulled apart since the end of the seventeenth century by the new requirements of a science that saw prose as its proper medium, are thus redefined by this common terrain of observation opened by the Wordsworthian poem, it also follows that the poetry itself must be of a new kind, of a kind that escapes all predetermination. Hence, it is not through the voice of the poet himself, or through the voice of spokespersons, that we will be best able to observe this redefinition of the ground of poetry at work, but through the poetics of Wordsworth's landscapes, where his poetry presents itself. The breach that opens between Wordsworth's poetry and both philosophy and the preconceived philosophical poem will be first considered. This breach between the two is what conditions the possibility of truth in a poem, what Badiou calls its "strictly intraphilosophical effects" (epigraph, n.p.). The operations by which a poem thinks will then be detailed in the second part before presenting, in the third part, some of the truth(s) composed by Wordsworth's poetic landscapes.

PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY: THE BREACH

The Impossible Wordsworthian Philosophical Poem

It is in its independence from philosophy that poetry produces truths that then, and only then, will philosophy exhume and display. Or, in the words of Badiou: "seize and expose, announce that they exist" (28/14). So we are very lucky that Wordsworth's dreams of "spousal verse[s]" and "consummation[s],"[7]

"fitting[s] and fitted[s]"[8] could never materialize into a poem. We are lucky that *The Recluse* has remained a name appearing intermittently but has not filled the space of volumes. In that respect, we are lucky that Coleridge preconceived it all for him, as we can read in the relation made of the project in the Table Talk of 21 July 1832:

> Wordsworth should have first published his thirteen books on the growth of an individual mind, far superior to any part of *The Excursion*: then the plan suggested and laid out by me was—that he should assume the station of a man in repose, whose mind was made up, and so prepared to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy. He was to treat man as man—a subject of eye, ear, touch, and taste, in contact with external nature—informing the senses from the mind and not compounding a mind out of the senses—then the pastoral and other states—assuming a satiric or Juvenalian spirit as he approached the high civilization of cities and towns, and then opening a melancholy picture of the present state of degeneracy and vice— ... . Something of this sort I suggested—and it was agreed on. It is what in substance I have been all my life doing in my system of philosophy. (307–08)

The project is definitely Coleridgean and could not have "fitted" Wordsworth. It is contrary to Wordsworth's attitude toward the world, as he mostly lets the senses inform the mind and not vice versa. It is also contrary to the nature of his compositions that by no means could "deliver upon authority a system of philosophy" because of their being *experimental poetic* works (see Wordsworth, 1798 Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads*, 49, my emphasis); that is, offered in a form the very nature of which is to be always in excess of systems and authorities. Such "laying out" of a plan and filling it in with predetermined steps, positions, and even conclusions reached, utterly denied the proper space of the Wordsworthian poem. Then, the philosophical poem was condemned to be always "yearned for," the verb expressing indeed the impossibility at work, as it utters both nostalgia for what had been conceived and longing for what could never be actualized. "I yearn toward some philosophic song" half-laments Wordsworth at the beginning of a passage from the opening book of *The Prelude* (1805, I: 230, 40), where his writing takes him to formulate the place of his poetry, in the break, or even the breach,[9] that opens between its experimental poetics and all space already filled-in with arrested predeterminations:

> Far better never to have heard the name
> Of zeal and just ambition than to live
> Thus baffled by a mind that every hour
> Turns recreant to her task, takes heart again,
> Then feels immediately some hollow thought
> Hang like an interdict upon her hopes.

> This is my lot; for either still I find
> Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
> Or see of absolute accomplishment
> Much wanting—so much wanting—in myself
> That I recoil and droop, and seek repose …
>
> (*The Prelude* [1805] I: 257–67, 42)

Here we witness, instead of the proclaimed wedding of philosophy and poetry, fractures opening in the poem: vertically, between "theme" and "self" as between "hopes" and "thought," both linked and unjoined in their overhanging ending stations; and horizontally, with the lexical repetitions and sound echoes attached to lacks propagating along the lines 266 and 261–62. The latter perfectly express the condition of Wordsworth's poetry: "hang[ing]" on the verge of the void which it produces, often, as here, by an enjambment, or a *drop*, as we should rather call it. What "hangs" over this void is "thought"—unpreconceived, unannounced, unthought thought, "hollow" not by insignificance but as "hollowing" in its ground-breaking novelty, "hollowing" by force and by necessity, in its refoundation of the place of poetry and philosophy. Consequently, anything aiming to deny this emptiness, this hollow space, as the space of Wordsworth's poetry, in its always "preparatory"[10] character, where thought unthought happens, apart from anything preexisting, chokes it.

The Philosophy in the Poem

Yet, Wordsworth's poetry is definitely not developing on its own, tightly shut in from the philosophies of its time. It is quite to the contrary.[11] Most notably, its link with Hartleyan associationism is fundamental. Wordsworth's theorization of his practice, in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, shows how much poetry owes to the mental processes unveiled by David Hartley in his 1749 *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations*. It can even safely be asserted that one aspect of the experimental quality of these poems resides in their unfolding as a poetic experimentation of Hartley's philosophy, their "principal object" being to touch "the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement." (§6, 289–90)

Meter works along these already drawn lines, in its pleasure-giving function, according to Wordsworth,

> in the feelings of pleasure which the Reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general, and in the feeling, whether chearful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the Poet proposes to himself. (§15, 306)

Meter raises or tempers passions pending on the previous experiences with meter to which one was submitted. The question of custom and of the repetition of past instances of experience is paramount, insisted on in the repetition of "accustomed to connect," weighing these lines and anchoring them to the world of the senses where things only reoccur.

The text, both the creation and the purport of his verses, Wordsworth then entrusts to the mechanism presented in Hartley's philosophy. Hence the value accorded to the past in his otherwise innovative poems. Whereas many accounts of Wordsworth's poetical composition have chosen to freeze the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" at their origin in its forever instantaneous upsurge, Wordsworth's prose sentence goes on and reorients the flow both backward and forward, toward a future opened by repetitive returns to the past:

> For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so by the repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished... . (§7, 291–92)

The fact that poetry cannot only be produced by the poet but also have a beneficial effect on the readers thanks to mechanical repetitions, as the end of this paragraph from the Preface makes clear, was most famously experimented by the poet "On revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July, 13, 1798" ("Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," *Lyrical Ballads* 156–61). It is re-presented in the poem which, by repeating the modified, ever complexified, sensations received, works to prolong Wordsworth beyond Wordsworth, as well as the scene beyond the scene, through his sister's re-actualization of the same different landscape: for the third time within the text, "this green pastoral landscape" (l. 159) reappears, gathering in this formulation place-elements which were still scattered in their second coming to the poet (ll. 14–18) and, in a scintillating "this" of all-but-simple immediacy, places both past and yet-unborn.

By this grounding in Hartleyan philosophy, Wordsworth's work does appear as "a situated inquiry about the truth that it locally actualizes or of which it is a finite fragment" (Badiou 25/12). Yet there is also within this achieved philosophical system, finished and finite as it is, expounding only within bounds and not making much allowance for originality, a principle of overgrowth. It relies on it, actually. And Wordsworth's poems, exploring it, expounding it, set it free—beyond Wordsworth's own "organic sensibility," as the case may be. This is what we will see now.

THE POEM'S THINKING

To Plato, philosophy is *opposed to* poetry, because the language of poetry is not that of thought. Poetry is the contrary of, and contrary to, discursivity, "the thought that links and deduces": *dianoia*. As a "*logos* subject to a law," the thought-language valued by philosophy "has a paradigm. This paradigm is mathematics." The poem, as against this "rule-bound," slow, step-by-step progress, is seen by Plato as instantaneous, out-of-the-blue "affirmation and delectation," Badiou explains (33/17–18). Whereas Badiou also insists, after Plato, on the decisive separation between the domains of philosophy and that of the art work—an apartness that enables the art work to produce truths—he is not following the same line of thought. Indeed, his essay "What is a Poem?" demotes Plato's originary opposition between poem and matheme along the line of their respective languages.

Meter and Feelings

Badiou points to "everything that the poem owes to Number," by which, obviously, their languages converge (36/20). To Badiou, dialoguing with Plato, this manifest foundation of poetics in mathematics immediately highlights its link with thought and, beyond that, consequently, its primary position vis à vis philosophy whose task can then be to unravel the truths contained in this thought-language of numbers (28/14–15). To Wordsworth, a former student of mathematics in Cambridge, the link between numbers, poetry, and philosophy is hardly less detailed and paramount. As Marc Porée's recent article on "Les *Lyrical Ballads* au risque de l'arithmétique" reminds us and demonstrates, "no poet has, more than Wordsworth, encensed mathematics" (Porée 274). "Encensed" and in-sensed, given sense to, made sense of and given direction to, indeed. As Marc Porée shows, Wordsworth's poems play with figures and arithmetic operations. Many poems develop around them, as if in an attempt to test the limits of the reign of rationalism of the preceding era, as well as to put in doubt the certain and indubitable accumulation of gains expected by the one commencing. But they are also certainly meant to assert the *poetic* nature of the œuvre.

Numbers are the first language of the poet, the determining structure that conditions a second, verbal, language.[12] Wordsworth himself uses the term as a synonym for meter in the seventeenth paragraph of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads,* which presents an associationist view of numbers both in the composition and in the reception of poetry (§17, 307–08). This mechanistic organicism revisited by the poet in his theoretical prose constructs the poem according to the romantic scheme plan evoked by Badiou: the poem thus conceived and pondered constitutes a "finite" product into which "the infinite-true" "descends" (23/11). But this is not all there is to numbers. Meter operates as one aspect of "the visibility of artifice" by which "the artistic thought" thinks itself according to Badiou (38/21). As such, it

un-finishes the poem too. Indeed, it is turned not only backward, toward the poet's ascendants, but also forward, toward the unforeseeable, the poet's "second selves," and his readers. In the case of feelings, for instance, since Wordsworth indissociably links their production with meter, who can say that the task of his numbers stops where Wordsworth has consigned it? Now enunciated, the very principle of activation of feelings by meter will necessarily produce as well the thought of feeling in Wordsworth's poems (the thoughtful thought behind), and intimate the specific way of thinking of Wordsworth's poetry, what Paul Rozenberg has so aptly named the "orientation" that the romantic poem produces in its essential gesture.[13]

The Politics of Poetics

Feelings, reproduced and produced in the meter, are the Wordsworthian twist both to Hartleyan associationist philosophy—which only considered them as by-products—and to the decorum of Belles Lettres. In their singularity (their unborrowable character), secularity, and historicity, they come to debunk the more universal aspirations of the Enlightenment. Yet another blow is given to the philosophy of the previous age by this force operating within the poem, meter. Indeed, with meter, the supposedly mimetic quality of a language supposedly copying the real, cannot resist. Even at the apogee of empiricism. If we read, for example, the beginning of "The Matron's Tale," we can clearly observe not only what the metrical language does to "the real," but also what it does to the poem:

> On Deepdale Head, and Brothers Water (named
> From those two brothers that were drowned therein)
> Thence, northward, having passed by Arthur's Seat,
> To Fairfield's highest summit. On the right
> Leaving St Sunday's Pike, to Grisedale Tarn
> They shot, and over that cloud-loving hill
> (*The Prelude* [1805] VIII: 231–36, 278)

On the one hand, the iambic beat of the blank verse lines raises this specific spot of the Northern Lakes to the dignity conferred by this time-honored form. This poeticization, in itself, at that time of composition—which was also the time when the official surveys of England were made, and where one's place of living was given existence to on the maps if one was rich enough to pay for it (Wiley 29)—is, unquestionably, a willed and conscious political gesture on the part of the poet. On the other hand, besides the super-raising of these high places into eminence, is a kind of egalitarian levelling not going on in the iambic pattern, too? Low places and high places, tarns and summits, all are halved by the foot units; not forgetting, in this levelling gesture, mythical King Arthur—the first part of his name falling into the penultimate foot unit, the second into the final one. Wordsworth

would not have liked that, who, like so many compatriots, turned his back on the French Revolution when violence on the Continent went quite beyond discretion.[14] But the thinking principle in meter exceeds the poet's thoughts.

With this poetic artifice, the link of the language of the poem with sensible experience—the very link that Plato judged "impure" and detestable (Badiou 34/12), anti-philosophical and, by way of consequence, anti-political—is greatly frayed. With numbers, *in* numbers, politics enter the poem: just as it develops feelings, meter modifies the configuration of the real. The sensible considered by Wordsworth's poetry is thus always already doubly vanishing: vanishing *in fact*, historically, in the enormous societal—and hence geographical—changes that were going on precisely at the moment of Wordsworth's composing; and vanishing again in the "orientation" (political, philosophical, ethical) impressed on it by his verses.

COMPOSING TRUTHS

To seize an immovable sensible, and keep it as it is, is not the object of Wordsworth's poetry:

> Why should I not confess that earth was then
> To me what an inheritance new-fallen
> Seems, when the first time visited, to one
> Who thither comes to find in it his home?
> He walks about and looks upon the place
> With cordial transport—moulds it and remoulds—
> And is half-pleased with things that are amiss,
> 'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.
>
> (*The Prelude* [1805] X: 728–35, 398)

Wordsworth's "purpose" is to produce truth. This is what he announces in the 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, when he expresses his belief that this volume may launch "a class of poetry … well adapted to interest mankind permanently" (§4, 287). This formulation is quite striking. It is as if *it* acknowledged what Wordsworth, later, could not: that truth, to form, requires an undefined multiplicity of poems, "a class of poetry." Truth that, in the words of the modern philosopher, is "an infinite multiplicity" (22/10) will be "composed" not within one work, but within "an artistic configuration." What is an artistic configuration? It is, Badiou says,

> a generic multiple, [which] possesses neither a proper name nor a proper contour, not even a possible totalization in terms of a single predicate. It cannot be exhausted, only imperfectly described. It is an artistic truth, and everybody knows that there is no truth of truth.

> Finally, an artistic configuration is generally designated by means of abstract concepts (the figural, the tonal, the tragic…). (25–26/12)

And landscape, let us add to this list of imaginable artistic configurations. Wordsworth's landscapes, rendering as they do "a prior configuration obsolete" (25–26/12), make manifest, in the same gesture, an artistic truth, a politics and a philosophical orientation.

Singularity and Transvaluation

Wordsworth's landscapes and the truths that form in them are not "general and operative" as Wordsworth himself dreamed it should be, in his 1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (§E, 301). But they are very local, parochial even, specific and active, in order to be "operative." He has been harshly criticized both in his own days and in ours, too, for that reduction of the focus—and yet, truth was piercing there. Meyer Howard Abrams reminds us how "[t]hese deliberate outrages upon true taste, judgment, and the ideality of poetry," in Horne's judgment, are the defects that have "cost a great poet twenty years of abuse and laughter" (Horne 191–92, qtd. in Abrams 399).[15] Jerome McGann, as for the most resounding contemporary protesting voice, condemns Wordsworth's focalization on spots of verdure. He deplores the efficiency of the romantic displacement that occurs in a Wordsworth poem. And he points at the Wordsworthianism guilty of discarding the Enlightenment's universal politics: the naturalization, or rather the "vegetalization" that goes on in Wordsworth's poems: "The place of [historical and circumstantial] thoughts and such concerns is usurped, outgrown" (McGann 83). McGann is right: Wordsworth's poeticizations of places redirect the focus. They de-universalize the perspective and de-univocalize the opinions. It is precisely how they redefine truth in the way modern philosophers like Badiou conceive it: truth is historically and locally determined, it is "*this* singular truth, and not the self-consciousness of the whole" (42/23, original emphasis).

In order to take the full measure of the "displacement" brought about by the artistic configurations of Wordsworth's landscapes, we shall, after Marc Porée, consider "what remarkable effects the poet draws from these singular configurations" (280). The phrase "There is a thorn" is paradigmatic and fundamental indeed. In its "simple eloquence, on the verge of dullness" (280), it tells it all by telling it plain, and local, and singular. The poem "The Thorn" presents itself, unashamedly, as a poem of displacement. To Isabella Fenwick, Wordsworth had recalled its composition thus:

> 1798. Arose out of my observing, on the ridge of Quantock Hill, on a Stormy day, a thorn which I had often passed in calm and bright weather without noticing it. I said to myself, 'Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this Thorn permanently an impressive object

> as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment?' I began the poem accordingly, and composed it with great rapidity... .
>
> (*Lyrical Ballads*, Notes to the Poems 334)

A thorn that had not been seen is now seen. A displacement is thus displaced. It may seem perfectly ridiculous and very far off the social concerns that could—or should—have occupied Wordsworth. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution was tearing apart, under his very eyes, the links of charity and paternalism constituting his countryside as a community. He could, then, have decried the fate of forsaken maidens left with child, as the original ballad does, or the economical pressures and accelerations of rhythms that drive crowds to judge hastily and speak inconsiderately. Instead of that, a 253-line poem is inspired by the coming into sight of one thorn, and develops around a marshy spot of roughly less than three cubic feet that yields nothing to sight beyond its mere presence. And yet, in spite of all that, this "so little," one can find it very difficult to cry at "usurpation" and waste of time. Because, on the one hand, it is with *this* consideration of the singular—the petty and narrow singular—that Wordsworth's poems give a new life to this process of "transvaluation" put into light by Abrams (390ff.), the very process displayed in the Scriptures, by which the low is made high, the left behind given attention, the unremarkable remarked.

Powerlessness and Mystery

On the other hand, it is not insignificant that the thorn should have become visible to the poet in weather conditions more fit to impair sight than to sharpen it—a situation reflected in the episode recounted in stanza xviii where it is in "Mist and rain, and storm and rain" that the narrator definitely, for the first and only time in the poem, comes across a woman (*the* woman?) in flesh and blood, whom he had previously encountered only through hearsay, beliefs, or delusions, and was now taking for a "jutting crag" ("The Thorn," l. 188–98, 121). It is not insignificant either that the very limited spot that is the focus of the poem, measured with care, lavishly described, should eventually yield no revelation. No revelation of the empirical kind, anyway. No nameable revelation, either. And this may well be where another truth is formed, in this unnameableness that surrounds essential mystery.[16] Badiou evokes Mallarmé who "inaugurates an ethic of mystery founded on the respect, by the power of a truth, of its own powerlessness" (41/23). This is because he has not read Wordsworth. Wordsworth's stormy, rainy, misty, vaporous landscapes produce this fundamental mystery. They are supported, in their impediments of the visible, by what Wordsworth, in his Note to "The Thorn," calls "deficiencies of language" (332). These "deficiencies" both pertain to language generally and are exacerbated by Wordsworth's poetics.

By developing not according to predetermined philosophies, preformed ideas, and already expressed theories, but upon an absence, in all uncertainty, Wordsworth's landscapes produce the grounds where truths will pierce—truths not just reiterated or given, but to be unearthed from beyond their compost of ambiguities and mysteries forever denying immediate access.

NOTES

1. Plato's command is quoted by Alain Badiou in the second essay of his *Petit manuel d'inesthétique* in the original French version (35); and in the translated edition, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (19). Hereafter, references to the French text will be given first and, separated by a slash, followed by references to the English translation by Alberto Toscano. Whereas the French quotation from Plato runs: "La cité dont nous venons de citer le principe est *la meilleure*, avant tout en raison des mesures prises à l'encontre de la poésie" (31, my emphasis), the English omits the superlative.
2. In his well-known 1954 *PMLA* article, "The Contemporaneity of the *Lyrical Ballads*," Robert Mayo questions the revolutionary character of the volume on account of the fact that their "themes" are already stale and "commonplace in the minor verse of the last years of the eighteenth century" (490), their titles very much like what could be expected then, and their figures downright "stereotypes" (495)—when they are not seen as part of "the long procession of mendicants who infested the poetry departments of the *Lady's Magazine*, the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and other popular miscellanies in the last years of the eighteenth century" (500). The only difference that Mayo seems prepared to admit (if not to explain) between the *Lyrical Ballads* and the big amount of verses he has considered is that "they were much better than other poems published in 1798" (486). But they were not "much better": they were an altogether different "class of poetry," the "experimental" character of their poetics requiring to be read, and not just their themes and clichéd pictures.
3. In his 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, §23, Wordsworth hopes the 1798 volume has produced and presented "genuine poetry" (314).
4. See Stuart Curran's *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* for an evaluation and examples of this decline (24–25).
5. Basil Willey notes how "Instead of being able, like Donne or Browne, to think and feel simultaneously either in verse or in prose, you were now expected to think prosaically and to feel poetically. Prose was for conveying what was felt to be true, and was addressed to the judgement; poetry was for conveying pleasure, and was addressed to the fancy" (83–84).
6. See Willey, ch. 10, "The Heroic Poem in a Scientific Age" (185–237).
7. See Wordsworth, Preface to *The Excursion* (1814), l. 52–71 (*The Poetical Works* 5: 4–5).
8. I am here referring to William Blake's vehement rejection of such spousal dreams in his *Marginalia*: "You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted I know better & Please your Lordship" (667).

9. We can think here of the "breach" that has opened in front of the poet and that he considers from almost the top of Snowdon. It is where, to him, Nature has "lodged / The soul, the imagination of the whole" (*The Prelude* [1805] XIII: 64–65, 460).
10. In the 1814 Preface, "Preparatory" is the adjective Wordsworth uses to qualify the introductory poem to this 1814 edition of *The Excursion*, which is itself presented, like all the other poems written so far, in fact, as "ante-chapel[s]," "little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses"—in other words, empty architectures, structures of the void, to the unforthcoming major, solid, philosophical poem of *The Recluse* (*The Poetical Works* 5: 2).
11. One needs only check the plentiful literature on "Wordsworth and Locke," "Wordsworth and empiricism," "Wordsworth and Hartleyan associationism," etc., to form an opinion on this respect. Among such publications, one can quote: Bewell, Caruth, Fairer, Hayden, Lamb, Manly, Quinney, Sullivan, and Thomas.
12. I am following here Stuart Curran's approach to genre as "underl[ying], motivat[ing], and organiz[ing] all literary discourse," in *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (5).
13. Paul Rozenberg, in his 1973 *Le Romantisme anglais. Le défi des vulnérables*, very convincingly contends that the Romantics are not concerned with describing the world in which they live either for description's sake or in order to provide ready-made images of happiness or despair: their "descriptions" are poetic points of view *orienting* toward Happiness / Nature / Innocence / Harmony… He writes that "Maintaining the point of view of the Intolerable requires work, a work of and on vision. The Romantic visions are not out-of-the blue transes … but *poetic instruments enabling a knowledge of the real*, raised against habits and blunt perceptions. With them, one can erase what does not count or put into relief what it is worth-while to see but could easily have escaped attention" (12–13, original emphasis).
14. See on this subject, for instance, Johnston 11 and Sisman 65.
15. We must also evoke here John Keats's Letter of February 3, 1818, to J. H. Reynolds, in which Keats gives vent to his exasperation at those programmatic banalities that make of Wordsworth the super "Egotist" that he has become in his eyes.
16. The eighth book of *The Prelude* (1805), "Retrospect: Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind," which has led us from the panoramic top of Helvellyn to the corner of a square in London where the poetic I considers a moment of tenderness between a father and his "sickly babe," leaves us with the expression of this "unutterable love" too (VIII: 859, 310).

WORKS CITED

Abrams, Meyer Howard. *Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York and London: Norton, 1973. Print.

Badiou, Alain. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.

———. *Petit manuel d'inesthétique*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998. Print.

Bewell, Alan J. "Wordsworth's Primal Scene: Retrospective Tales of Idiots, Wild Children, and Savages." *ELH* 50.2 (1983): 321–246. Print.

Blake, William. Annotations to Wordsworth's Preface to *The Exursion, being a portion of The Recluse, A Poem*. 1814. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. 1965. Eds. David V. Erdman and Harold Bloom. New York: Anchor Books, 1988. 666–67. Print.

Caruth, Cathy. *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991. Print.

Chaunu, Pierre. *La Civilisation de l'Europe des Lumières*. 1971. Paris: Artaud, 1993. Print.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Table Talk* recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge and John Taylor Coleridge. Vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Carl Woodring. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990. Print.

Curran, Stuart. *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.

Fairer, David. "Revisiting 'Tintern Abbey': The Challenge of the Familiar." *Romanticism: The Journal of Romantic Culture and Criticism* 19.2 (2013): 179–87. Print.

Friedman, Michael F. *The Making of a Tory Humanist. Wordsworth and the Idea of Community*. New York: Columbia UP, 1979. Print.

Gill, Stephen. *William Wordsworth: A Life*. 1989. Oxford, New York and Toronto: Oxford UP, 1990. Print.

Hayden, John. "Wordsworth, Hartley, and the Revisionists." *Studies in Philology* 81.1 (1984): 94–118. Print.

Horne, R. H. *A New Spirit of the Age*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884. Print.

Johnston, Kenneth R. "The Politics of 'Tintern Abbey.'" *The Wordsworth Circle* 14.1 (1983): 6–14. Print.

Lamb, Jonathan. "Hartley and Wordsworth: Philosophical Language and Figures of the Sublime." *MLN* 97.5 (1982): 1064–85. Print.

McGann, Jerome. *The Romantic Ideology. A Critical Investigation*. 1983. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1985. Print.

Manly, Susan. *Language, Custom, and Nation in the 1790s: Locke, Tooke, Wordsworth, Edgeworth*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. Print.

Mayo, Robert. "The Contemporaneity of the *Lyrical Ballads*." *PMLA* 69.3 (1954): 486–522. Print.

Porée, Marc. "Les *Lyrical Ballads* au risque de l'arithmétique." *Études Anglaises* 64.3 (2011): 273–87. Print.

Quinney, Laura. "Wordsworth's Ghosts and the Model of the Mind." *European Romantic Review* 9.2 (1998): 293–301. Print.

Rozenberg, Paul. *Le Romantisme anglais. Le défi des vulnérables*. Paris: Larousse, 1973. Print.

Sisman, Adam. *The Friendship. Wordsworth and Coleridge*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006. Print.

Sullivan, Brad. "Education by Poetry: Hartley's Theory of Mind as a Context for Understanding Early Romantic Poetic Strategies." *Cognitive Literary Studies: Current Themes and New Directions*. Ed. Isabel Jaén and Julien Jacques Simon. Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 2012. 201–18. Print.

Thomas, Keith G. *Wordsworth and Philosophy: Empiricism and Transcendentalism in the Poetry*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1989. Print.

Wiley, Michael. *Romantic Geography. Wordsworth and Anglo-European Spaces*. 1998. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print.

Willey, Basil. *The Seventeenth-Century Background. Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion*. 1934. London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979. Print.

Wordsworth, William. *The Excursion. The Recluse*. Vol. 5. of *The Poetical Works* (1795–1814). Eds. E. De Sélincourt and Helen Darbishire. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949. Print.

———. *The Prelude, 1799, 1805, 1850*. Eds. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill. New York and London: Norton, 1979. Print.

Wordsworth, William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Lyrical Ballads* [1798] [1800] [1802]. 1991. Eds. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. London and New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.

7 Philosophy, Politics, Sensation
The Case of John Clare

Yves Abrioux

How or what can philosophy signify in the case of an author conventionally described as a "peasant poet"? In the eyes of the publishers and patrons of John Clare (1793–1864), and also of the poet himself, the philosophical was synonymous with sociocultural prestige. For theoretically aware literary scholars of our age, philosophy enters English Romantic poetry by way of a speculative quality that is denied to Clare. Something akin to a phenomenological slant nonetheless informs the appreciation of Clare in political terms against the background of the enclosure of the English countryside. In a broader sweep that does not explicitly evoke the case of John Clare, English Romantic poets have been made to play a pivotal role in a philosophy of history that regards the emergence of a new sensibility, or regime of sensation, to have both enabled and constrained the development of modern democratic culture in the wake of the French Revolution.

I propose to sketch out an alternative reading of Clare that builds upon the portrait authoritatively established by John Barrell of a landless labourer affected in his sensibility and local "knowledge" by the enclosure of his childhood. While also touching upon the issue of the "mad" poet, raised by Clare's periods of internment in lunatic asylums, I shall radicalise Barrell's reading by appealing to the concept of the *ritournelle*, or ditty,[1] developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Along with Deleuze's associated concept of poetic "stuttering," this will lead me to consider Clare as the exponent of a "minor" poetics, in a sense freed from even the most implicit lip service to established philosophical or political hierarchies. In order to suggest what may be at stake here for both the philosophical and the political, it will, however, be necessary to begin by examining the interconnections and discontinuities between the approaches to his poetry alluded to above. The figure of Jacques Rancière will play a central role here.

John Clare is commemorated on a headstone in the graveyard of the village where he was born as "The Northamptonshire Peasant Poet." He never wandered far from his birthplace, save for a handful of trips to London at the height of his fleeting celebrity and four years of voluntary internment in a lunatic asylum in Epping Forrest, from which he nevertheless escaped, in order to make his way back home on foot. A few months later, his wife had him committed to an establishment in Northampton, where he remained

to the end of his life. The headstone on Clare's grave claims that "A Poet is Born not Made." This may appear to hold true of the early production of a self-tutored author. However, Clare discovered to his cost that the perceived spontaneity that ensured the triumph of his 1820 *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* was unable to protect his next volume from commercial failure. Encountering difficulties in getting a third volume published, he contemplated satire and composed essays ("Taste," "On Pride," "On Industry," etc.), as well as "letters" on natural history and an autobiography—all in the interest, as Anne Tibble puts it, of acquiring recognition "as a thinking writer as well as a 'country' poet" (Clare, *Journals* 12). This range of projects is wholly in tune with philosophy as it had been practised since the eighteenth century.

Together with a supply of devotional literature provided with the intent of shoring up Clare's defences against drunkenness and dissolution, the gift of a blank "Student's Journal" stimulated yet another writing project. Kept on a very regular basis for a year and six days and replete with nine appendices, the journal served, in the words of the first day's entry, to "give my opinions of things I may read or see & set down any thoughts that may arise either in my reading at home or my musings in the Field" (31). Clare's third volume of poetry came out in 1827. However, none of his various literary-philosophical projects saw print in his lifetime. Anne Tibble sees in this series of drafts and manuscripts the production of a "comprehensive, non-political mind" (18). She considers the writing of the essays, in particular, as reinforcing "untutored yet philosophic ideas" and admires the quality of Clare's "knowledge" and his "perception"—adding nevertheless the proviso that "the first is not equal in him to the second" (28). The whisper of condescension here has a long sociocultural, and indeed philosophical, history. Tibble's concession regarding the quality of Clare's ideas not to the contrary, the convergence of the non-political, the untutored and the primacy of perception over knowledge conforms to a hierarchy of roles and capacities that has characterized metaphysics from Plato onward. A similar slant informs Harold Bloom's positioning of the poet in the wake of High Romanticism—even, or perhaps especially, when he describes Clare as "the most *genuine* of poets" (my emphasis) while simultaneously insisting that the "mode" of Clare's vision and the "kind" of his poetry are completely "intersected" by "the huge Wordsworthian shadow" (*Visionary Company* 445). The implication is that the authority of the "genuine" poet is of a different—and lower—order than the triumphant repression of psychomachian tension that *is* influence in Bloom's "strong" poets.

The explicitly class-based political re-evaluation of Clare by John Barrell turns such implicit hierarchies on their head. Significantly, Barrell does not refer to Clare as a peasant but as an "agricultural worker, the son of an agricultural worker," born into the class of "landless labourers" (*Poetry* 118, *Idea* 208). He shows Clare coming to grips with the Thomson of *The Seasons* from a position informed by local knowledge of the particulars of his

environment, as opposed to the more distant and generalizing view typical of eighteenth-century Claudian landscape conventions in both poetry and painting. Thomson resolves the dialectical tension between the details of a landscape and its overall design through the synthesis obtained by his syntax (*Idea* 147). For Clare, that dialectic and that synthesis are both impossible. Experiencing a different dialectical tension, this time between a sense of particularity and a sense of multiplicity, he nevertheless proves himself capable of "the same sort of synthesis as was the dialectic in Thomson" but produces a different species of landscape by way of the "structure and momentum" of his significantly different syntax (158).

By thus attributing to the poetry of Clare dialectical powers on a par with Thomson's, Barrell levels the social and cognitive hierarchies that implicitly placed the "country" poet below the "thinking" writer. Instead, the contrast is between two ways of experiencing the world: through Thomson's "idea of landscape" or Clare's "sense of place." In the context of Barrell's cultural materialism, this opposition of "sense" to "idea" participates in the inversion of conventional hierarchies. For Barrell, Thomson described "what he saw only"—and saw as "properly remote," so that the "particular objects in a landscape" might be subdued to the "total design" (148; 136). Elsewhere, he assimilates this distance to the "philosophic eye" of a disembodied social spectator whose power of abstraction qualifies him for participation in the political life of the nation ("Public Prospect" 31). The assimilation of the abstraction obtained through distancing to a "philosophic" eye is a figure borrowed from Adam Smith. As such, and in contrast to the generalizing prospects of eighteenth-century landscapes proper, it testifies to the rise of entrepreneurial capitalists who did not enjoy possession of the topographical vantage points afforded to the landed gentry. According to Barrell, the "excursive" dimension of Thomson's poetry resolves this historical problem by allowing for a descent into particulars that the dynamic spacing of Claudian landscape absorbs into a "successful attempt to control nature" (*Poetry* 112). The peripatetic eye aligns itself with sense, rather than idea, to the extent that it implies that being—and not simply looking—*is* perceiving. Thomson's excursionary bourgeois thus represents an intermediary stage between the sociopolitical, as much as topographical, vantage point of the aristocratic "man of independent means" ("Public Prospect" 20), and the "manifold of impressions" in close-up engendered by the poems of the agricultural worker John Clare (*Idea* 148).

The phenomenological flavor of the contention that "being is perceiving," which gives its title to Barrell's 1988 essay on Thomson and Clare, differentiates both poets from the ideological discourse of "correct taste" in landscape in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, considered as "a means of legitimating political authority" ("Public Prospect" 19). More particularly, in the case of Clare's radical poetics it leans in the direction of Jacques Rancière's account of the birth of the aesthetic regime in modern times. Rancière has regularly referenced an English-language corpus. However, his

argument rests on a different historico-political context than Barrell's—that of the French Revolution. In its initial formulation, the thesis is couched in terms that are not very distant from Marc Richir's articulation of world-making phenomena (*phénomènes-de-monde*) and experiential determinates (*déterminés de l'expérience*) in the context of authentically revolutionary moments, when the socio-political sphere acquires a phenomenological dimension: "*affleurement à la phénoménalité du socio-politique*" (14, 66). The French Revolution is again the privileged reference here. Richir defines *phénomènes-de-monde* as a plurality of non-given phenomena that, "as *nothing other* than phenomena, are stretched over nothingness, the world as the plurality of horizons in which humans come to being." (14) Unconvertible into givens, they constitute the "irreducibly shimmering, ephemeral, unstable and contingent character of appearance." Conversely, determinate experiences are symbolically instituted givens belonging to the sphere of Richir's *institution symbolique* (14).

Writing in 1991, Richir dismisses French structuralism as a missed opportunity (*malencontre*)—a failed conjunction between the symbolic and the phenomenological that produced the false autonomy of Lacan's *Grand Autre* mechanically churning out the symbolic (14). Articulating poetic enunciation with political subjectivity in a revolutionary mode, Rancière's Wordsworth of a year later strives for a joyous and/or fortunate encounter (*rencontre heureuse*) in which the "I" of the lyrical voice, through its articulation with words and things in an immediately visible landscape, will testify to a spontaneous organization of sense-based signs that reflects the human ("Transports" 94, 96). The reflexivity which makes of nature the mirror of autonomous or free humanity belongs to a philosophical tradition that differs from Richir's. Explicitly phrased as a challenge to the hierarchy that sets the intelligible above the sensible (97), Rancière's concern with a new political experience of the "sensible" (*le sensible*)[2] in the Age of Revolution (93) impinges directly on the opposition between the "thinking" writer and the "peasant" poet that has long informed consideration of Clare. It nevertheless remains that the semiological move whereby he bridges the chiasmus of a political experience of "the sensible" that is, alternatively, a "sensible" experience of the political ("*une nouvelle experience politique du sensible ou experience sensible du politique*" [91]) is couched in terms redolent of Merleau-Ponty. The landscape as book (*paysage-livre*) is thus said to be written in the "very flesh [*la chair même*] of the sensible" (97). Not only does the sensible thus become a signifier. It furnishes the "poetical-political" master signifiers (*signifiants maîtres*)—nature, liberty, community—of Romantic and post-Romantic lyric poetry (99, 127), so that the "immediate identity" of a snowy mountaintop with a major classical Greek toponym in an allusion to Mount Parnassus from Byron's *Childe Harold* establishes "the identity of a word with its native land, of liberty with itself" (106).[3]

The chiasmus that enables such master signifiers is not sustainable. As a figment of the imagination springing into a traveler's mind at a distant

location (Andalusia), Byron's Parnassus is indicative of the chimerical quality of "poetic fable[s]" (105). Rancière traces the recognition of what he considers to be the impasse of poetical-political Romanticism from Wordsworth's early "moment of grace" in revolutionary France through to the insurmountable split, and consequent loss, of the lyrical 'I' registered by Mandelstam (98, 127). It is important to identify the lines of force which establish the utopian landscapes of Romanticism and then fatefully break them apart. Unsurprisingly, the establishment of master signifiers implies verticality. Byron's Parnassus reaches into the sky. Wordsworth's utopian landscapes have a more ambivalent orientation. In them, nature seems to play the part of a leveler, dethroning the king by eliminating his privileged situation and perspective. Yet in reality it takes the king's place, becoming the power that brings beings into existence and holds them together in a site that has been purged of privilege (98). Sunlight and clouds play a crucial role here.

In a slightly earlier text on Wordsworth, Rancière had already identified the "calm certainty" of the achievement of political harmony with landscape proper—a configuration obtained by a particular quality of sunlight: "*les jeux du soleil perçant à travers les nuages et les arbres*" (*Courts Voyages* 18). However, he complemented this reading with an approach more informed by psychoanalysis, relating the transformation of Wordsworth's poetry and politics to his biography, more particularly to his abandonment of Annette Valmont and the child she had by him. The difference in register (broadly psychoanalytical rather than loosely phenomenological) is less significant than the fact that both modes are semiotic, in a manner prevalent in French philosophy at the time. Rancière considers that Wordsworth tied the "mission" of the artist to the "enigma" of woman and the "passion" of children, so that various figures of the dead child, invariably abandoned by the political, become the relics of revolution, which is to say the "emblems" of its impossibility (34). Conversely, in their self-evident immediacy the "sensible signs" that constitute the master signifiers of the lyrical voice are to be carefully distinguished from the mimesis and the allegory rejected by the Romantics: "*Sur les routes de France, en cet été 1790, aucune image n'imite aucun modèle, aucune idée ne se trouve allégorisée*" ("Transports" 97). While not named as such, the Romantic symbol reigns supreme here—at least so long as its internal tensions do not cause it to implode and reveal it to be no more than a mere emblem, or perhaps a symptom. Rancière's regime of the aesthetic is built upon the aporias of the symbol.

Contrasting Keats with Wordsworth in a recent paper, Rancière seems to recall his conception of the sensible sign as a master signifier when he observes that equality in Wordsworth is "verticalized" from the outset, so that in *The Excursion*, for example, equality is granted from above ("Travail de l'araignée" 85). For Keats, conversely, it must be thought as "*completely horizontal*": "*L'égalité doit être pensée comme intégralement horizontale*" (85–86). This is achieved politically-poetically by allowing poet and reader

alike to conjointly weave a "chain of equivalences" in which the world-making powers of master signifiers anchored in sensation give way to the workings of the imaginary. Stimulated by sensation, the imagination both borrows from and contributes to a common tissue (82). The politics of poetry can thus be understood as the configuration of a "particular sensorium" that instantiates a type of relationship that is potentially generalizable (78). Rancière characterizes as "aesthetic democracy" (90) a "horizontal" aesthetic regime of this order.

For Rancière, the aesthetic is to be taken as characterizing, not a discipline, but an "idea," "figure" or "mode" of thought ("Esthétique deleuzienne" 525, 532, 533). As such, it constitutes a challenge to the sensible, and more particularly to thought itself in its lack of awareness of the force of thought that inhabits the sensible: "*une question qui porte sur le sensible et sur la puissance de pensée qui l'habite, à l'insu de la pensée*" (525). The emergence of the aesthetic, as "a force within the sensible of a thought that does not think" can be historically dated. It coincides broadly with the advent of Romanticism (533). The ensuing "aesthetic unconscious" is not without its own immediately political aporias. However, I am not so much concerned with these here, as with exploring how far it is possible to push the rearticulation of the powers of the philosophical, the political and the poetic to which Rancière importantly contributes.

Rancière's use of the expression "*une idée de la pensée*" to characterize the aesthetic recalls Gilles Deleuze. Indeed, it occurs in an essay on the philosopher. An important distinction must, however, be made. For Rancière, the sensible as formatted by the aesthetic corresponds to a regime that displaced the Aristotelian regime of representation, in an emphatically *longue-durée* approach to history. For Deleuze, an idea cannot be assimilated to the kind of generalization that this may seem to imply: "*On n'a pas une idée en général*" ("Création" 291). A general idea recalls, rather, what Deleuze repeatedly describes as a mere "image" of thought. An idea, on the contrary, is always domain-specific (291). To assess in Deleuzian terms whether Rancière's "aesthetic" intervenes in the domain of history as just such an idea thus requires a contextualizing move, to which the power of his refiguring of history can be seen to respond forcefully. For, if having an idea is an event "that arrives rarely" (291), Rancière's path-breaking periodization is just such an event. To consider next how far it may, in comparable terms, constitute an idea in philosophy is a different matter and would involve considering its power to develop into a concept proper, which is not the same thing (296). An idea not being in itself a concept, it is therefore not necessarily a matter for philosophy. If, as Deleuze again insists, ideas are to be treated as "potentials already engaged in such or such a mode of expression" from which they are "inseparable" (291), it remains finally to assess the capacity of Rancière's *longue durée* periodization to grasp the potentials engaged in the mode of expression that is at stake here: poetry in the age of Romanticism and, more specifically, in the work of the "peasant poet" John Clare.

For Deleuze, the capacity to have an idea in a given domain, say poetry, is tied to a command of its techniques (291). This is far from being the emphasis of Rancière's comments on Keats's well-known letter to Reynolds of February 19, 1818, as defining poetry as "a way of living" ("Travail de l'araignée" 78). Deleuze's parallel conceptions of philosophy, science and art, sketched out in the essay I have been considering (292–93) before being worked out more fully in conjunction with Felix Guarrari in *Qu'est-ce que la Philosphie?*, attributes to each discipline a matching set of features that testify to the shared dynamics of a process that he called "dramatization" (279–85). As dramatizations, philosophy and art are placed on an equal footing, while the "dramatic identity of dynamisms" (*Différence* 179) ensures that, like all dramatizations of an idea "in different orders," they "echo" each other (283). Hence, where concepts acquire consistency as events produced by conceptual "characters" on a plane of "immanence," art bundles or "monumentalizes" sensations (percepts and affects) as aesthetic "figures" on a plane of "composition" (*Qu'est-ce que la Philosphie ?* 186). An element created on either of these planes invokes other, heterogeneous elements that remain to be created on the other (188). The aesthetic thus ceases to be synonymous with a theory of the sensible understood as defining the field of possible experience. The very being of the sensible is revealed in a work of art, which thereby—like philosophy or science—becomes experimental (*Différence* 94).[4] It is precisely the experimental quality attributed to artistic and philosophical practices alike by Deleuze's particular form of pragmatism that radicalizes the challenge to the sociocultural hierarchies of metaphysics enacted by Barrell and Rancière. Philosophy and poetry coexist with science as so many heterogeneous practices whose dynamisms alone interfere, as each traces out its own specific plane over the chaos of "infinite variabilities" (*Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie ?* 189–90).

In Deleuze's works coproduced with Guattari, the plane of composition in poetry or music is typically configured as a *ritournelle* or ditty. Contrary to what is suggested by the received translation "refrain," "*ritournelle*" does not refer to a unit that is both repetitive and recurrent within a longer verbal or musical composition, but rather to a species of repetition-cum-variation governing an entire composition.[5] Both dimensions are significant. Repetition provides order, as in the rhythmical consonants and vowels of a child's dancing song (*Mille Plateaux* 382). However, where variation is missing, repetition perpetually yields the same old tune—Deleuze calls it a *rengaine* (*Différence* 14)—that reduces to "circular simplicity" something that is musically altogether more subtle: "ce qui est d'une autre musique" (*Logique* 305). And there is always the risk that the difference-in-repetition of this "other" music will collapse into mere repetition.

The cognate concept of "stuttering" (*bégaiement*) deployed in Deleuze's independently written texts explicitly references the tension between difference and repetition. Referring implicitly to Roman Jakobson's definition of the poetic function, Deleuze defines discursive stuttering as a double

transformation. On the paradigmatic axis, the principle of selection becomes one of inclusion ("*les disjonctions deviennent incluses, inclusives*") while, on the syntagmatic axis, the principle of the progressivity of connections becomes one of reflexivity: *connexions réflexives* ("Bégaya-t-il" 138–39). This dynamic can be seen at work in a late sonnet by John Clare, which I quote as it is given extant by Harold Bloom:

> Poets love nature and themselves are love,
> The scorn of fools, and mock of idle pride.
> The vile in nature worthless deeds approve,
> They court the vile and spurn all good beside.
> Poets love nature; like the calm of heaven,
> Her gifts like heaven's love spread far and wide:
> In all her works there are no signs of leaven
> Sorrow abashes from her simple pride.
> Her flowers, like pleasures, have their season's birth,
> And bloom through regions here below;
> They are her very scriptures upon earth,
> And teach us simple mirth where'er we go.
> Even in prison they can solace me,
> For where they bloom God is, and I am free.
>
> (*Visionary Company* 450)[6]

This is a poem whose key words and phrases are insistently repeated, with the former covering different syntactic or referential functions ("love" l. 1; "vile" l. 3–4). It is saturated with both internal rhymes and the assonances foregrounded by its first end-rhyme (/əv/-/uv/) and indeed the way this goes on to tighten, at least visually, the rhyme scheme of its Shakespearian sonnet form ("love"-"approve"-"below"-"go"). Such harmonics—which Tom Paulin hails as "the delicacy of [Clare's] acoustic texture (219)—implicitly contribute to Bloom's suggestion that this poem, in which Clare's "Wordsworthian vision" attains "final authority," may be "[t]he perfect sonnet of Romanticism" (*Visionary Company* 450). Bloom, however, insists on signifiers of a different order—that of Rancière's master signifiers—when he writes that "The flowers are nature's scriptures *because* they teach mirth, and mirth endows Clare with the greater joy of liberty" (451). Furthermore, making nature the equivalent of ("like") heaven (l. 10, 5) by blooming "through regions here below," the flowers incorporate the verticality that Rancière attributes to Wordsworth's sensible signs.

The suggestion that "Poets love nature" may be the "perfect sonnet" of Romanticism goes hand in hand with the status Bloom accords Clare as an "authentic" poet but—or thereby—a minor one "in the Wordsworthian shadow." Not "in *Wordsworth's* shadow": its perfection is generic.[7] As such, it can be grasped only by recoding its master signifiers into the capitalized terms that define Bloom's understanding of Romanticism as derived from

major players such as Wordsworth and Blake. In the process, Clare will be redeemed from putative madness: "The concern for liberty here is not just the obsessional desire of an asylum-pent countryman; the liberty is freedom from Self, the mocking of the Spectre." (451) This is once again to reaffirm the deep-seated social-cultural hierarchies that set the philosophic (say, the speculative) over the poetic and—or perhaps as—the sublime over the perfect. However, it is far from certain that the "final authority" with which Bloom credits Clare's deployment of Romantic signifiers (liberty and flowers; or, more precisely, the flowers of liberty) is capable of withstanding the assault of the poem's particularly dense deployment of the poetic function of language, as this is defined by Jakobson as "project[ing] the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (358).

Phrased in Deleuzian terms, the sonnet ties its play on the "asignifying particles" of language—its phonology—to a series of "highly significant terms" ("Bégaya-t-il" 140). In so doing, it leaves these master signifiers "intact, complete and normal" (140), thereby avoiding the "dessication," or voiding of signification, that Bloom associates with the idiom of "mad" Antonin Artaud (*Anxiety* 154). However, the density of repetitions obtained by Clare is not far from making the words ring boomingly flat. The poem's repetitiveness may equally, if not more persuasively, be taken as parodically deflating the authority of the Wordsworthian vision. If, then, it provides an instance of the poetic voice of Clare's asylum years warding off chaos by means of a ditty that performs a variation on a stock Romantic theme, it comes perilously close to making Wordsworth's sublimity sink into a Deleuzian *rengaine* recited by rote.

To read Clare's sonnet as either ironic or bathetic is to remain confined within the up/down schema of a merely inverted hierarchy. It is also to redundantly conjoin two species of stuttering—based, respectively, on the asignifying particles of language and on master signifiers—which Deleuze is careful to contrast. His observations regarding variations on "highly significant" terms are made with reference to Charles Péguy, whose verse Deleuze regards as being impelled by the "vertical thickness" with which these signifiers are imbued, through a species of intensive "superhuman" stuttering out of which individual words drop like so many "disjointed and decomposed members" ("Bégaya-t-il" 140). If this is at a far remove from the "perfect" but perhaps overemphatic conjunction of sound and sense in Clare's sonnet, it is because Deleuze's poetics favors disequilibrium. This is indeed central to his definition of "minor" language and literature, in a sense borrowed from musical terminology "where the minor mode refers to dynamical combinations in perpetual disequilibrium" (138). For Deleuze, the practice of art, as of philosophy or science, retains significance only as long as it remains minor in this positive sense. Conversely, the overcoding that makes a mode homogenous, and thereby major, is merely authoritarian.

The peculiar excellences of the "minor" work of the peasant—or indeed "mad"—poet John Clare may undoubtedly be held up as challenging or

inverting sociocultural hierarchies. However, Deleuze's principle of the "dramatic identity" of (musically) minor dynamisms suggests a different reading. I again take my cue from the survey of modes of poetic stuttering in "Bégaya-t-il." In Deleuze's systematic outline of compositional practices, Péguy's words are preceded by Ghérasim Luca's syllabic "particles." The simultaneous disjunctions and connections resulting from the proliferation of nested parentheses in Raymond Roussel's *Nouvelles Impressions d'Afrique* subsequently enable a further rescaling—this time to the level of the proposition, where the curves, loops, twists and deviations of a syntax "in becoming" (*en devenir*) have what Deleuze calls, in an expression borrowed from Foucault, a "dilating" effect (140–41). It is at this scale, rather than the phonological or the lexical, that Clare's most radical effects are obtained.

John Barrell has closely examined Clare's syntax, with its notorious lack of punctuation. In the paradigmatic case of "The Lane," he argues that the sentence structure is "intriguingly ambiguous" (*Poetry* 121):

> ***The Lane***
>
> The cartway leading over every green
> A russet strip then winding half unseen
> Up narrow lanes & smothered oer in shade
> By oak & ash in meeting branches made
> That touch & twine & shut out all the sky
> & teams will snatch to crop them driving bye
> Then over fields deep printed freely strays
> Yet crooked & rambling half uncertain ways
> While far away fields stretch on either side
> & skys above head spread a circle wide
> Letting low hedges trees snug close & fields of grain
> An unknown world to shepherds when descried
> & then the timid road retreats again
> A leaf hid luxury in a narrow lane
>
> (*Midsummer Cushion* 474)

Observing that the sonnet consists of a single sentence whose apparent first main verb ("strays") is delayed until the seventh line, Barrell argues that this deferment urges the reader to hurry through the stifling closeness of the wood before relaxing in open fields, whose disturbing unfamiliarity ("unknown world" l. 12) nevertheless leads back to an appreciation of the comforting "luxury" (l. 14) of concealment under the trees. For Barrell, this is a means of giving expression to the irresolvable conflict between two sensations, each contradictory in itself, provoked by the enclosure of Hepplestone, which had destroyed forever the familiar landscapes of Clare's childhood, and his all-too-brief success on the London literary stage: "the desire for and fear of freedom, and the anxieties and compensations of restriction" (123).

Such tensions and the poem's reassuringly "quiet closure" (121) are both characteristic of Clare's short poetic forms. Bloom makes a similar observation with reference to a very late lyric, in which the fifth of seven lines, hinting at the "essential inadvertence of nature," cuts across the master signifier of birdsong before resolution is reached "in warmth and leisure" (*Visionary Company* 456):

> ***Birds Nests***
>
> Tis spring warm glows the South
> Chaffinchs carry the moss in his mouth
> To the filbert hedges all day long
> And charms the poet with his beautifull song
> The wind blows blea oer the sedgey fen
> But warm the sunshines by the little wood
> Where the auld Cow at her leisure chews her cud
>
> (*John Clare* 427)

However, while the logical development of "Birds Nests" is underlined both by the absence of a conjunction at the beginning of the contrasting l. 5 and the "but" that opens l. 6, "The Lane" deploys multiple connectives and uses a purely consecutive "then" at its own critical transition point (l. 7). Similarly, while the former's three rhyming couplets interrupted by the nonrhyming l. 5 seem to constitute a half-sonnet only by happenstance, the latter provides a striking instance of Clare's minor variations on the Shakespearian sonnet form. These variations are minor, not so much because they spawned no obvious poetic progeny, but because they maintain the sonnet form in perpetual imbalance. The effect, in the case of "The Lane," is to complexify the peculiar dynamics implied by the poem's nine ampersands.

In his *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet, Deleuze champions the *ET* … *ET* … *ET* of adjacency, considered as incipient stuttering, over mere accumulation or juxtaposition (16). Operating alongside the combination of tight vocalic variations and consonantal mirroring displayed by the rhyme-scheme of "The Lane" (/in/-/ed/-/aj/-/ez/-/ajd/-/en/), Clare's free inversion of a Shakespearian sonnet into a series of four rhyming couplets followed by two more that are enfolded into mirrored tercets (AAB ABB) pushes the poem's multiple &s in just this direction. Although the closure obtained by means of the closing couplet is not wholly disenabled, the forward flow of the poem's single sentence gives way to the tensed rhythm of its phrasal segments whose present or past participles, each condensing a percept or sensation within a single line of verse, make it all but impossible for the main verbs to impose a clear syntactic logic.

Barrell sees Clare's syntax as breaking down under the pressure of a "complex manifold of simultaneous impressions" (*Poetry* 126), in a sonnet such as "Emmonsails Heath in Winter" (*Midsummer Cushion* 445). Angus Fletcher uses the same term to characterize the swerve away from Romanticism of

what he calls the "environment-poem," as inaugurated by Clare (127, 2). In either case, the emergence of such a manifold has political implications. Barrell's Clare is an agricultural worker caught up in his environment, rather than contemplating landscape at a leisurely distance. However, if this leads to an understanding of a self-contradictory political passion such as Clare's "desire for and fear of freedom" (123) that is consonant with Rancière's *longue-durée* overdetermination of sensibility by history, Fletcher is for his part closer to Deleuze when he defines the environment-poem as addressing "the most serious conditions of our time" by resisting its own "transcendental" impulses (14). Fletcher furthermore echoes Deleuze's "dramatic identity of dynamisms" both through his concern for the philosophic effects engendered by poetic practice and in his turn to the science of systems-theory. He significantly insists that theory, as he practices it, never "*imitate[s]* the sciences" (13, my emphasis). Rather, the "democratic-leaning ensemble of innumerable interactions," which for him constitutes the environment-poetic, "*is* an environment" (126, 122). Nevertheless, the notion that a reader "enter[s] into" an environment-poem "*as if* it were the reader's environment of living" (122, my emphasis) remains constrained by a principle of "imaginative belief" (123) that constitutes the environment-poetic as a major genre determining a mode of sensibility. This is to force a measure of transcendence on to Fletcher's environmental plane of composition by once more assimilating a given aesthetic to a historicized condition of possibility.[8]

Deleuze is once again strategic here, when he argues that the intensive stuttering of poetry can force language into a limit condition that manifests itself as a "music of words" ("Bégaya-t-il" 14). This has nothing to do with the musicality of language in the ordinary sense. It inheres in the "boom" and the "bust" of language when this is reduced to silence or illegibility by a particular style or "economy" of expression (142). If, as Barrell argues, the language of "The Lane" is *intriguingly* ambiguous, this is because, until the final couplet brings it to a rest (which its insertion in the mirrored tercets discretely unhinges), the sonnet remains poised in unstable equilibrium between the boom of its digressive phrases, or adjacent sensations, and the concomitant bust of its syntax. Together they push it towards unreadability. This is where the poem's language meets what Deleuze calls its "outside" (141), that is, not what is exterior to it and that it transcribes (such as the travails of a landless laborer turned poet), but a style that, bringing it perilously close to collapse, is perhaps better regarded as a nonstyle (142)—hence its proximity to madness. The peculiar music of Clare's poetics at its most radical is that of a style "yet to come" (142), insofar as it calls for the creation of answering elements on a different plane (*Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie ?* 188)—perhaps that of philosophy or of politics, considered, along with poetry, as heterogeneous practices placed on an equal level of risk in an ecology of adjacency. For the one never answers to the other. Poetic style as the "sensation of a concept" (188) remains unarticulated by its nonhierarchical others.

NOTES

1. I return below to my reasons for preferring to translate *ritournelle* by "ditty" rather than retaining Brian Massumi's choice of "refrain" in his 1987 translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *Mille Plateaux*. Translations from the French are mine throughout.
2. Rancière's use of *le sensible* is sometimes translated as "the perceptible." I follow the 2006 translation of *Le Partage du sensible* as "The Distribution of the Sensible" both because it evokes a disposition, rather than organs of perception, and to preserve the play between sensing and making sense.
3. Strictly speaking, Rancière distinguishes between abstract master signifiers (nature, liberty and community) and sensible signs such as a legendary Greek mountaintop or flowers (e.g. a multitude of daffodils). This, however, implies the reduction of poetic discourse to a series of philosophemes, which is not precisely his point. I have accordingly allowed myself a broader reading of his terminology, incorporating both the abstract and the sensible.
4. In *Différence et Répétition*, art as experimentation is contrasted with representation. Although Deleuze's and Rancière's uses of "representation" are quite different, it remains that each of the sensible "shares" that Rancière defines (the aesthetic as much as Aristotelian representation that preceded it) evokes a historicized condition of possibility.
5. For a more detailed discussion, see Abrioux 254–55.
6. This poem from Clare's "asylum years" (1842–1864) is sometimes presented as a fragment, with lines from the middle of the text truncated or missing.
7. The same may perhaps be said of Wordsworth's own late sonnet on Westminster Bridge, which Bloom suggests as an alternative candidate (450). The status of his third candidate, Keats's "Bright Star," raises more complex issues.
8. Hence the role Fletcher attributes to Clare as the source for a "new theory" of American poetry.

WORKS CITED

Abrioux, Yves. "Intensive Landscaping." *Deleuze|Guattari & Ecology.* Ed. Bernd Herzogenrath. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 250–65. Print.

Barrell, John. *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Space. 1730–1840.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972. Print.

———. *Poetry, Language and Politics.* Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988. Print.

———. "The Public Prospect and the Private View" (1987). *Reading Landscape.* Ed. Simon Pugh. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990. 19–40. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *The Visionary Company.* Revised ed. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1971. Print.

———. *The Anxiety of Influence.* London: Oxford UP, 1973. Print.

Clare, John. *John Clare.* Eds. Eric Robinson and David Powell. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984. Print.

———. *The Journals, Essays, and the Journey from Essex.* Ed. Anne Tibble. Manchester: Carcanet, 1980. Print.

———. *The Midsummer Cushion.* Ed. Anne Tibble. Manchester: Carcanet, 1979. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Différence et Répétition.* Paris: PUF, 1968. Print.

———. *Logique du sens*. Paris: Minuit, 1969. Print.
———. "Qu'est-ce que l'Acte de création ?" (1988). *Deux Régimes de fou*. Paris: Minuit, 2003. 291–302. Print.
———. "Bégaya-t-il." *Critique et Clinique*. Paris: Minuit, 1993. 135–43. Print.
Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Mille Plateaux*. Paris: Minuit, 1980. Print.
———. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* Paris: Minuit, 1991. Print.
Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues*. Paris: Flammarion, 1977. Print.
Fletcher, Angus. *A New Theory for American Poetry*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2004. Print.
Jakobson, Roman. "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." *Style in Language*. Ed. T. A. Sebeok. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960. 350–77. Print.
Paulin, Tom. *Crusoe's Secret. The Aesthetics of Dissent*. London: Faber & Faber, 2005. Print.
Rancière, Jacques. *Courts Voyages au pays du peuple*. Paris: Seuil, 1990. Print.
———. "Transports de la liberté." *La Politique des poètes*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1992. 87–129. Print.
———. "Le Travail de l'araignée" (2011). *Le Fil perdu*. Paris: Hazan, 2014. 73–93. Print.
———. "Existe-t-il une esthétique deleuzienne ?" *Gilles Deleuze. Une vie philosophique*. Ed. Eric Alliez. Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1998. 525–36. Print.
Richir, Marc. *Du Sublime en politique*. Paris: Payot, 1991. Print.

Part III
Romantic Selves

This page intentionally left blank

8 Philosophies of Identity and Impersonation from Locke to Charles Mathews

Angela Esterhammer

Amid the bizarre and delightful texts to be found in Romantic-era literary magazines is a brief article entitled "Personal Identity" that appeared in London's *New Monthly Magazine* in January 1824 (10: 37, 196–200). Like most magazine writing at the time, the article is anonymous, signed only with the initial "M." Using the witty, conversational style of the personal essay, M. profoundly questions the continuity of personal identity over time, starting from the premise that the physical body renews itself many times over the course of a person's life; M. speculates that this process probably takes about forty days. He cites the analogy of Sir John Collyer's stockings, "which, having once been woollen, were at length mended till they became converted thread by thread into entire silk" (197): are they still the same pair of stockings, the question goes, once their material substance has entirely changed? Originating with the eighteenth-century Scriblerians (cf. *Memoirs* 140), the anecdote of the darned stockings was often cited in nineteenth-century popular philosophy, where it took various forms: sometimes it featured worsted woolen stockings that are, by repeated darning with fine thread, upgraded into silk, and sometimes it was about silk stockings that are darned with wool so often they end up as rough worsted. The stockings were usually attributed to a miserly seventeenth-century merchant named Cutler, but by calling them "*Collyer's* stockings" M. increases the currency and the complexity of the anecdote. According to an advertisement in another contemporary magazine, Collyer's stockings are a "Universally Admired Invention" whose claim to fame is their hybrid material: luxurious and practical at once, this modern commodity consists of "silk stockings with cotton feet" ("Monthly Compendium" 2).

Later in 1824, Thomas De Quincey picks up the reference to Collyer's stockings in the tongue-in-cheek introduction to *Walladmor*, his English pseudo-translation of a German forgery of a Walter Scott novel. De Quincey uses the analogy of the darned stockings to disrupt the clear distinction between an original and a forgery, while boasting that he would be capable, if he chose, of forging a volume of "Posthumous Works of Mr. Kant" that would fool even Professor Schelling (xix). For M., our contributor to the *New Monthly Magazine*, what is called into question by a complete transformation of the material substance is not the text of a novel, but personal

identity itself. Surely human beings' mental identities—their feelings, tastes, and opinions—renew themselves just as thoroughly as the darned stockings and just as quickly as their physical bodies, M. speculates; and if people are constantly transforming into different people, what does this do to personal accountability in matters of morality and law?

The active circulation of the story of the stockings and the appearance of essays on "Personal Identity" in ephemeral middle-brow magazines signal a widespread engagement with the topic of identity during the late-Romantic period. The continuity of personal identity and its relation to the body, challenges that were put on the philosophical table over a century earlier by Locke, underlie Enlightenment theories of agency and sympathy and take on new dimensions in the digital age with the proliferation of virtual identities, artificial intelligence, and identity theft. In this chapter, I will explore the unexpected resurgence of Enlightenment thinking about the stability and continuity of personal identity during the 1820s—a late-Romantic decade that is usually thought of as conservative, consumeristic, superficial, and notoriously *un*philosophical. Yet philosophical questions surface in personal essays, fiction, and theatrical performance, and in these genres the problem of identity takes on new dimensions. One key manifestation of anxiety over personal identity is the fascination with the double or *doppelgänger* in Gothic fiction. Even the article in the *New Monthly Magazine* with which I began includes a *doppelgänger* experience in which the writer M. is confronted by an interlocutor who "took the form of myself as exactly as if reflected from a looking-glass" (200). This "spectred self" harangues M. with the conclusions M. has been trying to repress: that human identity is radically discontinuous, that human beings are composed of incongruous shreds of matter, and that man is "a mere machine, fabricating virtues of vegetables" (200).

M.'s anxiety that humans may be no more than machines evokes the late-Romantic fascination with automata, mechanical bodies that mimic humans. But, as the writer of a personal essay in an 1820s literary magazine, M. also participates in what might be seen as the reverse phenomenon: the creation of authorial identities that have no corresponding material existence. While "M." may be no more than a pseudonym, other journalistic personae were much more elaborate. With the launch of the notorious *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1817, it became fashionable for journalists to construct full-fledged pseudonymous identities that laid claim to distinct personalities, physical features, birthdates, addresses, and legal accountability—in other words, facsimiles that had all the attributes of real people except that they did not exist in reality. Meanwhile, on the theatrical stage facsimiles of persons were being enacted by performers such as Charles Mathews (1776–1835), a self-styled "imitator" or impersonator whose popular performances embodied the problematics of identity for a broad public throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century. My aim in what follows is to outline some of the ways in which the philosophical problem of

the continuity and uniqueness of personal identity reasserts itself in the late-Romantic era, and to consider how the problem is altered by being worked through in performative genres and embodied media—in journalism, fiction, and theatre. After surveying some of the philosophical background that put ideas about identity, agency, and sympathy into play, I will turn to the way these issues were revisited and transformed by Hazlitt, Keats, James Hogg, and Charles Mathews.

Book 2, chapter 27 of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), entitled "Of Identity and Diversity," locates identity firmly in self-consciousness, asserting that "personal identity can by us be placed in nothing but consciousness, (which is that alone which makes what we call self)" (309). Consciousness defines identity across time, as far backward as individual memory can reach and as far forward as the Last Judgment, when the same self will be held morally accountable for its past actions. But while identity is firmly linked to consciousness, according to Locke's hypothesis, consciousness and identity are *not* firmly linked to the body. Instead, by assuming that consciousness is "perfectly detachable" from the body, Locke undertakes what philosopher Charles Taylor has called "a series of bizarre thought experiments, e.g., of the same consciousness inhabiting different bodies, or two consciousnesses sharing the same, or bodies exchanging consciousness" (172). In the sphere of interpersonal relationships, Locke's readiness to detach identity from bodily substance also allows for deceit or impersonation—for someone to look the same as before but have turned into someone else, for individuals somehow not to be who their bodies suggest they are. Thus Margaret Russett traces Romantic-era fakery and forgery back to Locke, who opened up the possibility that "the body or 'man' can function as an impostor of the person" (Russett 41).

Locke's theory that identity reposes entirely in self-consciousness is theologically meaningful, but intrinsically problematic when it comes to action in the public sphere. While a completely subjective identity may be transparent to God at the Last Judgement, how could it ever be validated socially, legally, and publicly when no one has access to the self-consciousness of another person? Thomas Hobbes considers the question of identity in a more sociopolitical context and thereby introduces an explicit theatrical metaphor. In his chapter "Of Persons, Authors, and Things Personated" in *Leviathan*, Hobbes draws an analogy between acting in economic and legal contexts and acting in the theatre, and he makes this analogy central to the contractual basis of the social order. "A *Person*," Hobbes writes, "is the same that an *Actor* is, both on the Stage and in common Conversation; and to *Personate*, is to *Act*, or *Represent* himselfe, or another" (217). While Hobbes derives this definition of "person" etymologically from Latin *persona* 'disguise, appearance, mask,' it also corresponds to a seventeenth-century evolution in the meaning of "actor" from "a general agent or representative" to "its modern definition as a player or performer" (Agnew 98). As Jean-Christophe Agnew puts it, Hobbes "borrowed from the idiom of

the theater to frame solutions to the problem of political and commercial representation in a contractual society, where impersonality and impersonation threatened older forms of authority and exchange" (182).

The dimension of performance again comes together with the notion of self in Enlightenment empiricism and theories of sympathy, where identity is treated as an interpersonal rather than a metaphysical concept. The socially oriented theories of David Hume and Adam Smith confront the difficulty of mediating between persons and challenge Locke's assumption that individual consciousness is unified or *in-dividual* in the first place. In the section entitled "Of Personal Identity" (book 1, part 4, section 6) in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Hume asserts that persons "are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (252). He famously likens the mind to "a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations" (253). The theatre here enters Hume's theory as an analogy for individual consciousness, and he depicts the mind as a spectator of its own perceptions. The performative metaphor becomes even stronger in book 2 of the *Treatise* when he turns to social interactions between individuals. But Hume cautions readers against taking his figural language too far: "The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us" (253). His idea of the mind as a theatre stops short of ascribing or describing scenic space or material presence. Instead, materiality, embodiment, and staging will be added decades later by performers who bring the problematics of personal identity and self-consciousness into the actual late-Romantic theatre.

Adam Smith, confronting the problem of access to other minds in the context of his theory of interpersonal sympathy, foregrounds the role of the imagination as the necessary mediator of the epistemological distance between persons. At the outset of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) he writes:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. (9)

Admitting the impossibility of *im*mediate experience (and, hence, the necessity of mediation), Smith proposes that "imagination" serves a mediating function insofar as it can "copy" "the impressions of our own senses"

so as to create a "representation" or facsimile of another person's suffering. While sympathy demands the co-operation of several mediating or compensating functions to supply the lack of physical sensation associated with another person's suffering, Smith's increasingly corporeal language nevertheless makes sympathetic identification sound like a kind of bodily possession: "By the imagination … we enter as it were into his [the sufferer's] body, and become in some measure the same person with him" (9). At the end of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith comes still closer to detaching identity from the sympathizer's body and articulating a notion of impersonation. Sympathy ultimately depends on a kind of embodiment whereby "I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters" (317). Smith's modern interpreters point out that these formulations imply a loss of identity on the part of the sympathizing self and arrive, from a somewhat different direction, at a Humean view of consciousness as intrinsically fragmented. Jean-Christophe Agnew, for instance, notes that because the act of sympathizing "require[s] the spectator to impersonate the sufferer within the theater of his own mind," it ironically requires the sympathizer "to risk the loss of the self whose sympathy was at stake" (183).

Romantic-era writers not only continue to explore the fragmentation and vulnerability of the self, the discontinuous nature of identity over time, and the separation of personal identity from the body, but they also speculate further on the extent to which identity can be replicated, multiplied, and falsified. No doubt this orientation reflects the influence of social conditions in the early nineteenth century: increasingly anonymous urban environments, advances in technology and manufacture, and a consumeristic, commodified economy. But direct continuities with Enlightenment theories of identity can also be traced, an important one being the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* authored by the young William Hazlitt and published anonymously in 1805. "I am not the same thing, but many different things," Hazlitt writes (1: 35), echoing Hume and Smith but going beyond them to derive the very notion of self from a series of mediating operations that involve imagining the thought processes of others and comparing them to one's own mental processes. Hazlitt emphasizes the role of the imagination in creating a sense of "continued personal identity" (1: 28) out of a perception of similarities and differences: "It is by comparing the knowledge that I have of my own impressions, ideas, feelings, powers, &c. with my knowledge of the same or similar impressions, ideas, &c. in others, and with the still more imperfect conception that I form of what passes in their minds when this is supposed to be essentially different from what passes in my own, that I acquire the general notion of self" (1: 37–38).

The main argument of Hazlitt's *Essay* is that human actions are not automatically motivated by self-interest. Instead, we make decisions to act on the basis of imagining ourselves in a future state—a process that is not qualitatively different from imagining the state of mind of another person.

Hazlitt's theory of action involves more than one kind of "impersonation": the imagination projects itself into fictional selves, which may be the selves of other people or our own future selves, then brings some of these identities into reality by making an imagined future self coincide with an actual present self—that is to say, by performing the contemplated action. Hazlitt essentially reverses the direction of Smith's theory of sympathy and thereby radicalizes the idea of projecting the self into multiple identities: rather than imagining the suffering of another as a copy of one's own sensations, as Smith does, Hazlitt's principle of human action involves imagining one's own future selves as if they were other people.

It is tempting to compare the imagined selves of Hazlitt's early philosophical essay with the fictitious selves that proliferate in the journalistic world of the 1820s in which Hazlitt was a key player. When he reprises the topic of "Personal Identity" in an article with that title published in the *Monthly Magazine* in January 1828, Hazlitt actually articulates a much stronger and more durable sense of individual identity consisting of habits, tastes, and thoughts. He elaborates on each person's natural reluctance to give up his identity, even for the sake of someone else's greater talents or more fortunate circumstances: "We are not to be cozened out of our existence for nothing" (17: 273). But he still assumes that the self is composed out of a bundle of diverse perceptions and experiences: "All that we know, think of, or can admire, in a manner becomes ourselves. We are not (the meanest of us) a volume, but a whole library!" (17: 274). Many iterations of this fragmented or composite notion of identity, reminiscent of Hume's "bundle or collection of different perceptions," are to be found in Hazlitt's essays.

In general, reflection on personal identity during the 1820s becomes—like so much else during that theatrical decade—*accelerated, visualized, and performed*. It draws more or less explicitly on questions put on the table by Locke, Hume, and Smith, but these questions are significantly reformulated by being contextualized in magazine essays, fiction, and theatrical stagings where the author not only expresses constative arguments but at the same time self-consciously performs an identity. The appearance-conscious society of the late Georgian period places notable emphasis on external, interpersonal criteria that might guarantee the coalescence of identity—factors such as recognition by other people and legal accountability. This shift in emphasis from the Enlightenment concern with how I perceive *my own* identity to the late-Romantic interest in how my identity is communicated and perceived *by others* seems to encourage experimentation with mimicry and impersonation, in the sense of creating fictitious or forged persons or selves that are copies or imitations of real ones and that enter into relation with real persons.

A familiar example of late-Romantic impersonation, although it is not usually read in those terms, is Keats's notion of the "camelion poet":

> As to the poetical Character itself … it is not itself – it has no self – it is every thing and nothing – It has no character – it enjoys light and

> shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or eleveated [sic]. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body[.] (294–95)

Keats's language, when he writes that the poet is "continually in for – and filling some other Body," recalls the process of sympathetic identification described by Hume and Smith. The "camelion Poet" is also a received idea, one especially prevalent in Romantic criticism of Shakespeare. Keats is most obviously echoing Hazlitt's lecture "On Milton and Shakespeare," which he had attended a few months before writing the above lines, where Hazlitt affirmed that Shakespeare "had only to think of any thing in order to become that thing" (5: 48). But Keats's formulation takes on a new coloring because of the stress on identity ("A Poet … has no Identity"), because of the intrinsically self-fashioning genre of the personal letter in which he is writing, and because he is also responding to the forceful construction of "personalities" that had recently become a hallmark of new literary magazines in the style of *Blackwood's*. Writing in October 1818, Keats reacts obliquely to John Gibson Lockhart's critiques of the "Cockney School" in the January and May 1818 issues of *Blackwood's*, critiques that took in Keats himself but were primarily directed at his friend Leigh Hunt. Refuting Lockhart's charge that the immoral behavior of the characters in Hunt's poetry reflects Hunt's own immoral nature, Keats claims that the poet "does no harm" because he "has no Identity" of his own, no intrinsic nature to be either corrupted by or reflected in the evil characters that the speculative imagination may create.

As he counters Lockhart's depiction of the poet's character, though, Keats enters into a context that is rife with other kinds of identity-play and character-construction. Lockhart, writing for *Blackwood's*, does not write *in propria persona* but rather as the pseudonymous "Z.," and his critiques take the form of mock-personal letters ostentatiously addressed to another fictitious personage: that is, to "Mr. Leigh Hunt, King of the Cockneys" (*Blackwood's* 3 [May 1818]: 196). How different is Keats's "camelion Poet" from the chameleon journalists of *Blackwood's* who are continually "filling some other Body" by writing as pseudo-persons, who import Leigh Hunt into *Blackwood's* and parodically refashion him as "King of the Cockneys"? Even as Keats seeks to refute the charge that immoral characters correspond to a poet's own immoral nature, his description of the shape-shifting poet continues the tendency of *Blackwood's Magazine*, a periodical that was quickly becoming notorious for its manipulation of authorial, personal, and legal identities.

Another of the "camelion Poets" who figures in the early history of *Blackwood's* is James Hogg, who was instrumental in cofounding the magazine in 1817 and establishing its strategies of identity-construction, but who soon found those strategies maliciously directed against him. As Hogg continued to contribute to *Blackwood's* during the 1820s and the magazine continued to review his poetry and fiction, his coauthors usurped his identity by writing him into the regular "Noctes Ambrosianae" segments as the drunken, boorish, dialect-speaking "Ettrick Shepherd," a pseudonym Hogg also used for some of his own publications. Multiple Hoggs and multiple Shepherds thus circulate in *Blackwood's*, some of them having a physical and legal existence beyond the magazine and others not, some of them aligned with the James Hogg who embodied that identity in the real world and others proliferating textually to his detriment and beyond his control. It is hardly surprising then that Hogg's most famous novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), represents the Devil as an identity-stealing shape-shifter. The chameleonic figure who goes by the name of Gil-Martin has the ability to duplicate the appearance of other characters in the novel, making people believe they are seeing double or seeing their own double, undermining the notion of unique selfhood and personal responsibility for one's actions.

Mark Schoenfield has argued that the devilish Gil-Martin's usurpation of other characters' identities is related to the pseudonymous authorship that was practiced by *Blackwood's* (212), and print culture is indeed an important context for Hogg's novel. But *Private Memoirs and Confessions* also adds an intensely physical dimension and a strong legal inflection to the concept of impersonation, thereby evoking sources in Renaissance mysticism, Enlightenment philosophy, and legal theory, as well as a tantalizing parallel in contemporary stage performance. Gil-Martin's "cameleon art" (Hogg 95) involves both physiognomic and mental imitation of the features that constitute a person's identity. "By contemplating a face minutely," Gil-Martin explains,

> I not only attain the same likeness, but, with the likeness, I attain the very same ideas as well as the same mode of arranging them, so that, you see, by looking at a person attentively, I by degrees assume his likeness, and by assuming his likeness I attain to the possession of his most secret thoughts. (95)

As critics have pointed out (Duncan xxxiii, Russett 46), Gil-Martin's demonic impersonation of other people alludes to the sixteenth-century scholar-magician Tommaso Campanella, whose reputed ability to read other people's minds by molding his facial features into an exact replica of theirs was cited by Hogg's contemporary Dugald Stewart in his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (3: 131–32, 359). Stewart, in turn, references Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our*

Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, where Burke relates an anecdote about the "celebrated physiognomist" Campanella in order to illustrate the close relationship between the mind and the body in the perception of pleasure and pain:

> When he had a mind to penetrate into the inclinations of those he had to deal with, he composed his face, his gesture, and his whole body, as nearly as he could into the exact similitude of the person he intended to examine; and then carefully observed what turn of mind he seemed to acquire by this change. So that … he was able to enter into the dispositions and thoughts of people, as effectually as if he had been changed into the very men. (132–33)

Burke's anecdote gives a different coloring to Smith's theatricalized model of interpersonal sympathy in the contemporaneous *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, exposing the element of impersonation in Smith's idea that "I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters" (317).

The problem of identity and identification pervades Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions*. It is at the heart of the novel's detective-story plot that centers on the eyewitness identification and prosecution of a murderer, a process rendered impossible by the intervention of a character—Gil-Martin—who can precisely counterfeit the appearance and identity of others. Like the detective story, the novel's psychological dimension as a case study of the religious fanatic Robert Wringhim also implodes around the question of identity. Wringhim loses the ability to determine whether he himself or Gil-Martin has committed murders, whether Gil-Martin is a friend, a *doppelgänger*, or a demon who has taken possession of his mind and body, or whether his own identity has split into a double being composed of his dead brother George and Gil-Martin, to the extinction of his proper self. This "anomaly" presents itself to Wringhim as two equally impossible alternatives:

> Either I had a second self, who transacted business in my likeness, or else my body was at times possessed by a spirit over which it had no controul, and of whose actions my own soul was wholly unconscious. This was an anomaly not to be accounted for by any philosophy of mine[.]
> (Hogg 136–37)

What renders Hogg's novel so haunting is that the anomaly cannot be accounted for by any philosophy or interpretation of the reader's, either. Blurred rather than focused by the different perspectives from which the story is told, and destabilized rather than authenticated by the appearance of a facsimile of James Hogg himself within the text, questions of agency, accountability, and the identity of characters remain utterly undecidable.

Hogg's multifaceted exploration of identity also invokes legal and economic dimensions that merit further attention. An apparently tangential, but actually quite central episode in the novel brings the theme of identity together with legal practice and philosophical tradition. Near the end of the apparently objective "Editor's Narrative" there is a courtroom trial in which the housemaid Bessy Gillies, a character who appears only in this episode, is required on the witness stand to identify some stolen and recovered goods as the property of her mistress Arabella Logan. But Bessy persistently refuses to swear that the items displayed in the courtroom are the same ones she has seen before in her mistress's house. Shown some silver spoons, Bessy will only affirm under oath that "I hae seen some very like them" (52); shown a gown purportedly belonging to her mistress, she admits that "It is like one I hae seen her hae out airing on the hay raip i' the back green" (53). The candid testimony of the dialect-speaking servant girl provides comic relief, yet this apparently marginal dialogue also focuses the problem of the continuity of identity over time and the criteria by which it can be affirmed. When she is asked specifically about the monogram "C" on some silver spoons, with the implication that it stands for "Colwan" and thus identifies property that Arabella Logan inherited from the Colwan family, Bessy responds instead that "a' the spoons in Argyle, an' the half o' them in Edinburgh I think" bear the same inscription. The monogram could just as well confirm that the spoons legitimately belong to the woman accused of stealing them from Arabella Logan, that is, Arabella Calvert: "A C is a very common letter," Bessy offers, "an' so are a' the names that begin wi't" (53). Rather than proving identity or property, the monogram only calls attention to the semiotic problem of reference and, by extension, to the remarkable coincidence that the accuser and the accused share the same Christian name, Arabella. Similarly, the gown shown in the courtroom is "like" one that Bessy has seen in her mistress's possession, but it resembles even more closely "ane I hae seen Mrs Butler in the Grass Market wearing too" (53). The commodification of spoons and gowns undermines the possibility of uniqueness and identification.

Bessy does suggest that she might be able to identify the spoons if "I had put a private mark on them wi' my ain hand" (52). Alluding at once to craftsmanship as opposed to mass production, to the ambivalent authority of the signature, and to the intimacy of code ("a private mark"), this remark hints at criteria that might counter commodification's challenge to identity. Yet a moment later Bessy disclaims that same "hand" as a means of identification: "Bless you, sir, I wadna swear to my ain fore finger, if it had been as lang out o' my sight, an' brought in an' laid on that table" (53). This off-hand remark starkly and abruptly reinvokes the relationship between consciousness and bodily identity, detaching the two even more radically than Locke did, suggesting that even one's own body parts could be subject to manipulation by legal definitions of identity and denying that the identity of the body persists across time. Bessy Gillies's testimony thus encapsulates the unreliability of sensory, especially visual, perception as a means of identifying things, bodies, or people. There is simply no way to bridge the crucial

difference between "being like" and "being," between resemblance and identity. Though ironically placed in the mouth of a humorous, marginal character in the courtroom scene, this aporia pervades every level of Hogg's novel and extends beyond it to the reader's engagement with the text.

Contemporaneously with Hogg, the disruptive effects of impersonation were being enacted in the even more experiential medium of late Georgian theatre by the performances of Charles Mathews. A comic actor, Mathews became most famous for the shows called "At Homes" that he performed annually in London and on provincial and international tours from 1817 almost until his death in 1835. Season after season, he attracted full houses and almost invariably positive reviews across the spectrum of British magazines and newspapers. Playbills for these performances invited the public to visit Mathews "At Home" at the English Opera House (also known as the Lyceum) or, in later years, at the Adelphi Theatre. Dressed in ordinary evening clothes, Mathews welcomed the audience as if into his drawing-room, then embarked on a three- to four-hour miscellany of impersonations of character-types and specific individuals, interspersed with songs and enhanced by ventriloquism. Each season's "At Home" had a different title and a nominal plot, but all of them followed the same pattern: Mathews performed about a dozen characters of diverse ages, genders, classes, professions, and ethnicities and ended with his trademark "monopolylogue," a grand finale in which he reprised all the characters introduced in the course of the evening, brought them into dialogue and morphed from one into the other in rapid succession.

"What might such a performance suggest about the constitution of personality and the capacity to inhabit several different identities?" asks Malcolm Andrews, one of several critics to explore the strong influence of Mathews on his devoted fan Charles Dickens (123). The partly physical, partly mental tactics Mathews employed to disrupt the one-to-one correspondence between person and personality seem especially significant: imitating external elements (dress, accent, idiolect) as well as body language (posture, facial expression, voice) and even interior disposition (thought processes, instinctive responses), he rendered it uncertain where identity resides or how it can reliably be determined by observers. His impersonation of an Old Scottish Lady, introduced in his first "At Home" of 1817 and reprised throughout his career, was a perennial favorite that caused reviewers to write, "This appeared to us the most complete adoption of a character, the most perfect identification of one being with another, we had ever seen" (Mathews 2: 454). *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* marvelled at how far Mathews' imitations exceeded external mere mimicry of speech or behavior. Instead, the magazine writes,

> when he throws himself into the manner and habit of another person, he at the same time absolutely throws himself into their mind and character. He feels and thinks and says, as well as *acts*, as they would inevitably do under the same circumstances: not as he recollects they *have done*, but as he knows, as it were intuitively, that they *would do*. (7 [June 1820]: 311)

More than his on-stage performances, though, the *Blackwood's* reviewer is here referring to Mathews' well-known habit of impersonating celebrities at real-life social occasions, often in extempore after-dinner speeches that he would give in the style of "Coleridge, Curran, or some other distinguished orator whose health had been proposed, on the speculation of Mathews's replying to the call" (Mathews 4: 191). The journalist P. G. Patmore, describing these impromptu performances, writes of Mathews as "not merely adopting the voice, appearance, and external manner of the party imitated, but assuming the very tone of his thoughts, and the cast of his sentiments, and putting them into language, the impassioned tone of which was not inferior to that of the persons imitated" (Mathews 4: 191). Impersonating a celebrated thinker and speaker, Mathews seems to become invested with the very ideas of that person and to utter words that *the other* would speak but Charles Mathews *as himself* would not have had in him. Whether on or off the stage, whether he is imitating a specific person like Coleridge or a representative character-type like the Old Scottish Lady, Mathews' characters appear to become autonomous agents whose speech and behavior is consistent with their—rather than Mathews' own—mental, physical, and spiritual identity.

That contemporary reviewers are not merely using hyperbole but are concerned with describing a unique and potentially disturbing quality of Mathews' performance is suggested by the contemporaneous debate over "mimicry" and "imitation." These terms were being used during the 1820s to process other unfamiliar aesthetic experiences; "mimicry" was a criticism levelled, for instance, at the new visual medium of the panorama, a 360-degree painting that surrounded the viewer and seemed to replicate reality *too* precisely (Wood 104). In a literary context, the controversy surrounding the term "imitation" is evident from reviews of *The Poetic Mirror*, a collection of poems in the style of Wordsworth, Byron, and others published anonymously in 1816, but actually written by James Hogg. Uneasy as to whether the texts were to be taken as parody or tribute, several reviewers used the term "imitation" to critique this mode of writing (Groves viii). Mathews regarded his own practice of "imitation" as the bodily version of "what satire is when applied to the mind" (Mathews 3: 109). He vigorously rejected the label "mimic" and consistently identified himself as an "imitator," often reaffirming this distinction in his introductory address to the audience before the "At Home" performances. His admirers agreed that he exemplified the more profound connotations of interiority and dynamism suggested by the term "imitation," and some reviewers extended this observation by comparing Mathews' performances of character to the creation of characters by leading novelists. The *Edinburgh Magazine*, for instance, put Mathews' performed characters on a continuum with the literary creations of Walter Scott (who also, at the time, maintained a pseudonymous identity as the "Author of Waverley" or the "Great Unknown"):

> But is it less ridiculous, and less ungrateful, to apply the title of a mimic to him who has created, and indelibly impressed upon our

> minds, almost as many original and exquisitely discriminated characters, as the author of the Scotch Novels has? … In fact, speaking with reference to their respective *comic* characters alone, and, of course, without meaning to place them on any thing like a level, even in this respect, we have no scruple in asserting, that if Mr Mathews is only a mimic, the Great Unknown is no better. (10 [June 1822]: 758)

Coleridge's comments on Mathews also invoke a resonant aesthetic vocabulary. After seeing Mathews perform in 1814, Coleridge wrote a letter of combined admiration and advice to the actor, whom at that point he had never met, although they later became close friends when the Mathews family bought a cottage near Coleridge's home at Highgate. In contrast to the terms "personate" and "imitation" that most contemporary commentators were using, Coleridge—ever the desynonymizer—uses the newer verb "impersonate" and the more radical noun "Duplicate" (referring, for instance, to Mathews performing a "Duplicate of [the actor George Frederick] Cook[e]"). For the distinction "mimicry vs. imitation" Coleridge substitutes "copy vs. imitation," explaining that a copy "aims at *identity*" while a more sophisticated imitation "implies & demands *difference*." Imitation-with-a-difference includes the necessary aesthetic component that elevates the actor's representation of character into "a work of exquisite *art*" and "a species of *Poetry*" (Coleridge 3: 500–01).

Although Mathews and his reviewers opposed "mimicry" to "imitation," one might speculate that the often disturbing effect of his impersonations derives from their being *both* external mimicry *and* mental imitation. Eyewitnesses praised the profundity of his imitations by testifying that along with "the face" of his subjects Mathews "also … put on the mind" (Mathews 2: 453–54). Yet it seems still more remarkable that when he imitated a person's mind, Mathews also put on that person's physical face. "His representation of [the actor Charles] Incledon was extraordinary," Leigh Hunt reports; "his nose seemed actually to become aquiline" (186). Mathews was able to use his unusually mobile facial features to perform on-stage changes of character that reviewers described as bodily transformations: "If he be called on for an Irishman, his face on the instant swims with whisky …; if from the land of cakes [i.e. Scotland], his features become sharp and hard … If he be dubbed an alderman, he swells out, cheeks, lips, and all, to meet the sudden dignity" (Mathews 4: 178). After watching an "At Home" performance, the German traveler Hermann von Pückler-Muskau emphasized the rapidity and completeness of these changes: "he so totally altered his face, speech, and whole exterior, with the rapidity of lightning, that one must have seen it to believe it possible" (57). Many who knew Mathews described him as having unusually mobile facial features, and his ability physically to take on the resemblance of characters he is portraying is cast in an interesting light by P. G. Patmore as he views a bust—a *copy* of Mathews' body—that

forms part of Mathews' extensive private gallery of theatrical portraits. His "*private* face," Patmore notes,

> has so long been employed in illustrating the characters of others, that it has at length lost its own. And this should be a subject of any thing but regret to its possessor; for from this quality it is, that much of his extraordinary power arises, poetically speaking. His face, like the material of the bust before us, is as clay in the hands of the modeler; and he himself is the artist, who can mould it by turns into whatever he wishes it to be. So that ('not to speak it *punningly*') if Mr. Mathews has lost the countenance of one person, he has gained that of every body else. (467)

Thus, the experience of Mathews' public or private performances will not let spectators forget the extent to which identity is both external and embodied. They experience this interpenetration for themselves when he speaks or acts a character and they no longer see Mathews, but instead see that character. Mathews' impersonations of mind and body suggest a notion of identity in which internal disposition manifests itself in the body and physical resemblance aligns with mental resemblance, a notion that tantalizingly recalls Tommaso Campanella's Renaissance magic and James Hogg's depiction of the devilish Gil-Martin. Equally suggestive is the anticipation of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, a model of identity whereby internal disposition is inculcated in the physical body and determines one's verbal and behavioral responses to the environment. Mathews' mode of impersonation, one could say, amounts to an ability to instantaneously and thoroughly assume the habitus of his subjects.

Mathews' disruption of personal identity was particularly acute when he practiced impersonations outside the theatre in everyday social encounters. An audience member at the English Opera House might delight in the aesthetic illusion of Mathews' multiple personifications, but she knows that all the characters she hears and sees on stage are really Charles Mathews. Indeed, the spectator *must* realize that behind the diversity of disguises, appearances, and thrown voices is the singular Mr. Mathews in order to appreciate his talent and grasp the point of the show. Thus the playbill for the 1825 "At Home" entitled "Mathews's Memorandum-Book" unmistakably emphasizes Mathews' identity:

> Nat Glibb, a Waiter ..... Mr. Mathews!
> Friaswaffer, a Tender-Hearted German Cook ..... Mr. Mathews!!
> Molly Gramachree, an Itinerant from the Emerald Isle ... Mr. Mathews!!!
> Thady, her Son ..... Mr. Mathews!!!!
> Mr. Christopher Chyle, come out Pleasuring ..... Mr. Mathews!!!!!
> Mr. Allum, come out Experimentalizing ..... Mr. Mathews!!!!!!
> Brother Simple, of the Loyal Laughing Lodge
> of Free and Accepted Masons ..... Mr. Mathews!!!!!!!
> And, Mr. Mathews on a Provincial Trip.
>
> (Mathews 3: 482)

The point of Mathews' frequent and elaborate off-stage hoaxes, on the other hand, is really to deceive friends and strangers into thinking that he is someone else—a deception that was, by all accounts, astonishingly successful. He was able on numerous occasions, without wearing any kind of disguise, to circulate among a party of his friends (William Godwin among them) and give himself out as the fictional "Mr. Pennyman" without any of them recognizing that it was actually Charles Mathews (Mathews 2: 7–20). Like the pseudonymous identities circulating in late-Romantic periodicals, Mathews' impersonations blur the line between playful and deceptive kinds of pretending. Just as Mathews could actually make people perceive and interact with a fictitious Mr. Pennyman (and not with Mathews-as-Pennyman) until he chose to undeceive them, *Blackwood's* pushes the boundaries of pseudonymity by giving its pseudonymous personae all the attributes of physical and legal selves, thereby encouraging the elision of fiction with reality rather than marking the boundary between them.

Visually, the situation in which real identities and pretended identities occupy the same space is effectively depicted in the so-called "quintuple portrait" of Mathews by George Henry Harlow:

Figure 8.1 George Henry Harlow, *Charles Mathews as four different characters, Fond Barney, Mr Wiggins, Buskin and idiot*. Reproduced by permission of The Garrick Club / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

The justly famous Harlow portrait depicts Mathews once (seated) as himself and simultaneously as four of his on-stage personalities. By showing Mathews studying his own characters as he embodies them, the portrait encapsulates the paradox by which proliferating fictional identities have exactly the same features as real people, a paradox enacted by the format of the "At Home" performances. Each "At Home" began and ended with Mr. Mathews, as the genial host, addressing the audience directly and welcoming them intimately to his parlor. The persona of the "real" Mr. Mathews thus surrounds and links together the various episodes of the performance, much as the editor of an anthology frames the other voices represented in the collection—but with the crucial distinction that all *these* voices are produced by the same individual. London's *Literary Gazette* expressed this paradox nicely by noting in a review that Mathews is "in himself a host," punning on "host" as "emcee" and as "multitude" (375 [27 March 1824]: 205). Mathews' characteristic performances thus manifest *both* the rapid multiplication and transformation of identities *and* the continuity of an underlying self, while showing how little there is to distinguish between performed fictional selves and performed real selves. How can the audience tell, after all, whether their host Mr. Mathews is a more or less performative character than the other characters impersonated by Mathews in the course of the evening? And is Mr. Mathews more or less theatricalized when hosting an "At Home" in the theatre than when hosting an "At Home" at his home? The Harlow portrait depicts these ambiguities when, as Charles' widow Anne Mathews writes, it "represents my husband in five characters" (Mathews 1: 302). Anne Mathews' formulation does not make any distinction between the four pretended characters and the fifth one, the real Charles Mathews—interestingly, the only character who will not stand up.

In these and other ways, Mathews engaged audiences, reviewers, and acquaintances such as Coleridge, Walter Scott, and William Godwin in wide-ranging reflection on the differences between performing a real self and really being a performed self. This debate took place in the theatre as in literary magazines where journalists were avidly experimenting with textual forms of impersonation. On at least one occasion, the ironic credibility of Mathews' performed identities was affirmed in a court of law, when an official tried to insist that the scripts for his performances were subject, like all spoken drama, to censorship under the Licensing Act, because they clearly contained dialogue. But the law proved unable to deal with Mathews' split and duplicated selves: when he managed to convince the Licenser that "I spoke to myself in one voice, and answered myself in another," he reports, "they could not go on with the proceedings" (Mathews 4: 483). Mathews' performances bring the problematics of personhood before spectators in a visual, embodied, and participatory form. His death in 1835 gave rise to a charming, anonymous anagram on his name: "Mathews—*saw* them. Mathews—*was* them" (Mathews 4: 444). While this word-play encapsulates the conflation of appearance and impersonation in Mathews' performances,

the writer of another obituary underlines their serious thought-provoking quality: "His wonderful talents were so exercised as to enlarge our minds and improve our understandings, whenever we had the good sense to view his delineation of character with a philosophic eye" (Mathews 4: 421).

The late-Romantic reprise of the problem of identity thus challenges traditional Romantic notions of subjectivity and interiority, suggesting that the notions of a performed self and an authentic self are co-present in the early nineteenth century. On the one hand, Charles Taylor articulates a widely accepted view of Romantic subjectivity in *Sources of the Self*, his expansive study of the making of identity in modern Western culture, when he identifies Rousseau as "the starting point of a transformation … towards a deeper inwardness and radical autonomy" (363). According to Taylor, the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement formed a watershed after which modern identity increasingly developed in the direction of a "free, self-determining subject" (395). Taylor's *longue-durée* history of moral philosophy provides a strong context for notions of subjectivity, bourgeois agency, and emotional authenticity in which many readings of Romantic literature continue to be grounded. Yet Hazlitt, Hogg, Keats, Mathews and other second-generation Romantics who depict fragmentary and constructed selves contribute to an alternative tradition, one described in the context of theatre history and cultural studies by John Jervis. Jervis explores the modern self as a theatricalized identity constructed from "diversity, fashion, the superficial, the endless play of roles, none of them any more 'natural', authentic or sincere than any other" (15). Within this tradition, Rousseau appears as a social theorist who acknowledged the dominance of theatricality, who recognized that social life depends on "a separation between self and image, self and other, a separation that both permits, and rests on, the role of the imagination in constructing a grasp of both self and other through theatricality" (27). Even as the notion of an authentic personality takes hold in modern culture, "personality" (so Jervis) can only be expressed using "typological, emblematic features, features that are in principle just as available to others to mark *their* 'individuality'" (30). The ironic yet philosophical reflection on identity that occurs in literature and popular culture of the 1820s might best be ascribed to the juxtaposition of the co-existing tendencies outlined by Taylor and Jervis: the persistent desire for an interiorized, authentic self on the one hand, and the unignorable manifestations of a composite, theatrical, commodified self on the other.

WORKS CITED

Agnew, Jean-Christophe. *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. Print.

Andrews, Malcolm. *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves: Dickens and the Public Readings*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Ed. James T. Boulton. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958. Print.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 6 vols. Ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956–1971. Print.

[De Quincey, Thomas.] *Walladmor:"Freely Translated into German from the English of Sir Walter Scott": And Now Freely Translated from the German into English*. 2 vols. London: Taylor and Hessey, 1825. Web. 29 Sept. 2014. <http://books.google.ca/books?id=j5cHAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_g e_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

Duncan, Ian. "Introduction." In Hogg, *Private Memoirs* ix–xxxiv. Print.

Groves, David, ed. *James Hogg: "Poetic Mirrors": Comprising the* Poetic Mirror *(1816) and* New Poetic Mirror *(1829–31)*. Frankfurt: Lang, 1990. Print.

Hazlitt, William. *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*. 21 vols. Ed. P. P. Howe. London: Dent, 1930–34. Print.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. C. B. Macpherson. London: Penguin, 1985. Print.

Hogg, James. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Ed. Ian Duncan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge. 2nd ed. Rev. P. H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon, 1978. Print.

Hunt, Leigh. *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*. Ed. J. E. Morpurgo. London: Cresset, 1948. Print.

Jervis, John. *Exploring the Modern: Patterns of Western Culture and Civilization*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. Print.

Keats, John. *Keats's Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Jeffrey N. Cox. New York: Norton, 2009. Print.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Roger Woolhouse. London: Penguin, 1997. Print.

"M." "Personal Identity." *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 10.37 (January 1824): 196–200. Web. 29 Sept. 2014. <http://books.google.ca/books?id=qNgRAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_g e_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

Mathews, Anne. *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*. 4 vols. London: Bentley, 1839. Print.

Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus. Ed. Charles Kerby-Miller. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966. Print.

"Monthly Compendium of Literary, Fashionable, and Domestic Advertisements for August 1, 1807." *La Belle Assemblée*. Appendix to volume 3 (July–December 1807): 2. Web. 29 Sept. 2014. <http://books.google.ca/books?id=NXEAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gb_s_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

Patmore, P. G. "British Galleries of Art—No. XI: Mr. Mathews's Theatrical Gallery: Second Part." *New Monthly Magazine* 10.41 (May 1824): 461–7. Web. 29 Sept. 2014. <http://books.google.ca/books?id=qNgRAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

[Pückler-Muskau, Hermann von.] *Tour in England, Ireland, and France, in the Years 1826, 1827, 1828, and 1829 … by a German Prince*. Philadelphia: Carey, Lee, & Blanchard, 1833. Web. 29 Sept. 2014. <http://books.google.ca/books?id=9IwMAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

Russett, Margaret. *Fictions and Fakes: Forging Romantic Authenticity, 1760–1845*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.

Schoenfield, Mark L. "Butchering James Hogg: Romantic Identity in the Magazine Market." *At the Limits of Romanticism: Essays in Cultural, Feminist, and Materialist Criticism*. Eds. Mary A. Favret and Nicola J. Watson. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994. 207–24. Print.

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Eds. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie. Oxford: Clarendon, 1976. Print.

Stewart, Dugald. *The Works of Dugald Stewart*. 7 vols. Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1829. Print.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989. Print.

Wood, Gillen D'Arcy. *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760–1860*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. Print.

9 The Happiness of Romantic Philosophy

Joel Faflak

I

In Thomas Pfau's account of the mood of the British Romantic *Zeitgeist*, mood constitutes an individual's "capacity for social agency," and thus offers an "affective template for social praxis" (35). Pfau outlines three defining Romantic moods—paranoia, trauma, and melancholy—corresponding respectively to three historical moments: Revolution (the British metropole's suspicion of radical fervor), post-Revolution (the post-traumatic stress of this radical zeal), and (post-)Napoleon (the lingering depression that marked the second-generation Romantic and Regency response to an earlier generation's experience of revolution). Pfau's moods speak to a critical climate in which "rupture and privation seem more credible than repose and fulfillment" (Johnson 18). This negativity or negative affect reflects the impact of a post-transcendentalist approach to Romantic thought and writing, one that revises Frye's secular scripture or Abrams's natural supernaturalism, in which Romanticism's creative afflatus empowers, or at least imagines, the self to transform historical, social, and political contingency and disillusionment. Now that we think of this conversion narrative as part of the Romantic ideology, we must thus ask: If our current sense of Romantic moodiness transforms glad, mad, or sad Romantics into symptoms of their suspicious, shocked, or depressed times, where does the gladness of reparation and transformation fit? By eliding the elation of political radicalism or philosophical idealism, we are now compelled to ask how the "rupture" or "privation" of paranoia, trauma, or melancholy and the "repose" and "fulfillment" of happiness might somehow be mutually constitutive. How now to read the compulsive repetition of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"—"More happy love! more happy, happy love!" (25)—or the truncated elation of Shelley's last poem—"Happy those for whom the fold / Of … " (547–48)?

The recovery of Romantic women writers or the study of Romanticism's political enthusiasm, for instance, has spurred a renewed interest in modes or structures of feeling—sentiment, sympathy, sensibility, passion, etc.—sidelined by an earlier emphasis on thought and imagination. This criticism re-attaches the Romantic body to its mind, often to read this suture psychosomatically, and so, for my purposes, begs the question of what role

happiness might play as philosophy's master feeling. I am concerned less with Romantic philosophy per se than with the ways in which happiness accompanies what Wordsworth in his Intimations Ode calls "the philosophic mind," "the soothing thoughts that spring / Out of human suffering" to produce a "faith that looks through death" (188–91). Trained to withstand "rupture" and "deprivation," this is the mind of Wordsworth's Narrator or Pedlar who, like Adam Smith's impartial spectator, learns to imagine (but not experience) Margaret's suffering. Such a mind is disciplined to overcome sociopolitical or economic hardships as the other's problem, and thus to imagine one's problems magically resolved via their projection onto the suffering of others. This vicarious interaction secures happiness not as goal or attainment but as the object of a possible self-fulfillment for which one is taught to wish, devoutly. In such an evangelical scenario, the training ground for which is the Romantic Regency as it renegotiates the problems of the first British Empire (signaled by a threat to global dominance with George III's loss of the colonies and to domestic security with post-1789 events) en route to fulfilling the civilizing mission of the second Empire, the problems don't go away. To paraphrase Vivasan Soni in *Mourning Happiness* (2010), this process makes the inevitable failure of happiness its constitutive possibility, so that problems are ameliorated by stimulating one's *desire for* happiness. Keats's aesthetic contemplation demonstrates the complexities of wanting what the urn wants, an endless frustration that leaves one wanting more; Shelley's triumph points to an inevitably endless deprivation that necessitates a constant striving for satisfaction at any costs—a future that rather cynically casts its shadows upon present failure and suffering as the groundwork of an anticipated success, a hope whose possibility comes from the wreck it perpetually contemplates.

This chapter suggests how Romanticism figures this endless obstruction as one of the time's most potent ideological weapons. For if Romanticism exemplifies the "restless self-examination" (Rajan 25) of the philosophic mind, how might it harness this restlessness, the product of exposing enlightenment to its own dark interpretation, as a renewable resource? Romanticism draws its social, scientific, and cultural imagination, and thus its industrial, political, and global power, from this restlessness; but it is equally anxious to control and contain its mobility, to reckon "with the thing / Contemplated … the Mind and Man / Contemplating" (847–49), as Wordsworth writes in "Home at Grasmere," Book One of *The Recluse*, which was to write the philosophic mind large as the apogee of Romantic thought. Ironically, "Mind and Man" revises his earlier theme:

> Not Chaos, not
> The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
> Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
> By help of dreams – can breed such fear and awe
> As fall upon us often when we look

> Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man –
> My haunt, and the main region of my song. (788–94)

To reform the diversity of "Minds" into the universal "Mind of Man" is to unify multiple personalities into singular, coherent shape. But it also inoculates "Man" against his "Mind" by syntactically and thus clinically separating them. Wordsworth seems compelled to rein in what in his 1805 version of *The Prelude* he calls "Reason in her most exalted mood" (13.169–70) a feeling Reason or feeling *of* Reason that, as he learned firsthand from political fervor on the Continent and at home, could get out of hand.

Elsewhere I have described the time's emergent psychiatric consciousness as a symptom of its ability to marshal wayward inner resources toward broader outward purpose (see Faflak). To invoke Matthew Arnold: the Victorians needed to discipline the Romantic mind for outward thought and purpose, thus to harness the period's energies in order to power a better (second) Empire. Edward Shorter notes that early psychiatry's response to those who "did not fit into a picture of bliss" (50) was framed by an increasingly hegemonic sense of family values, thus suggesting that psychiatry's civil discipline of the domestic space is a necessary overture to its larger project of domesticating the global family, civilly. Darrin McMahon notes that the Christian belief in a felicitous afterlife, which derived from ancient ideas of virtue, gave way to the Enlightenment notion of a right to happiness. As Roy Porter states, the Enlightenment "translated the ultimate question 'How can I be saved' into the pragmatic 'How can I be happy?" (22). Locke argues that happiness is a natural right we expect governments to ensure, but is desire's prime mover only insofar as it counters the "uneasiness" of the Will as an autonomous spur to human action. Further concerned to discern true from illusory forms of happiness, Locke helps to compute the Enlightenment's "felicific calculus" (McMahon 213) for managing pain and fomenting happiness, epitomized in Bentham's 1776 *Fragment of Government*: the greatest happiness of the greatest number, a kind of Happiness Advisory Alert that ensures society's well-being. We can read this affective register through a host of writings within, or having an influence on, British Romantic print culture: the moral and political philosophies of Smith, Hume, or Godwin; the aesthetics of Burke, Kant, or Schiller; Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) or Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). Together this body of thought constellates an emergent public education in how both individuals and nations might adjust their moods in order to weather adversity at the same time that this thought critiques how the happiness of progress (and thus the progress of happiness) manages "uneasiness."

In *Interior States* (2008) Christopher Castiglia suggests that democracy depends on subjects battling inner demons as an anthropomorphized displacement for attacking exterior political conflicts. We can similarly read in the British Romantic politics of feeling an "aesthetics" of education that turns the psychopathology of human happiness into a benign, productive

cultural resource. Andrew Scull notes that from early on psychiatry evoked a "latent power … for enforcing conformity" (154). This latency becomes the Janus face of British Romanticism, tying personal transformation to mental governance. This cathexis binds self-empowered subjects within an imaginary national classroom in which the mental *labor* of managing wayward thoughts and feelings stages the proper way to internalize ideas of school, church, and state. This political efficiency addicts individuals to the right to be happy. Thus the enlightened examination of feeling becomes the evangelical imperative to feel *well*, to not worry and to *be* or *get* happy, yet often by feeding upon others' misery in the name of empathy and rehabilitation. Following Daniela Garofalo's point that Jane Austen attempts to "reconcile a liberal appreciation for the individual and a hierarchical desire for submission" (113), I thus take up Jane Austen's fiction, in particular *Persuasion* (1818), which articulates for the turbulent politics of Regency Britain a global politics of happiness that resembles what, taking up Derrida's notion that "there is no such thing as a harmless remedy" (99), I would call a Romantic *pharmakon* of happiness. In this sense it is possible to read Austen as symptomatic of a transference between Romantic literature and Schopenhauer.

II

Austen could not have read Schopenhauer, quite apart from the fact that hardly anyone was reading Schopenhauer when he published what was to become the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* (1819) the year after Austen's last novel was published posthumously.[1] *The World as Will and Representation* was largely ignored, as was a later 1844 edition, the philosophical world still being in the idealist grip of what Schopenhauer rather ruefully calls a rampant "Hegelism" (*World* 1: xxiv). Yet it is precisely how Austen "misses" Schopenhauer that intrigues me, and thus how her fictions begin to exert their programmatic sway on nineteenth-century consciousness, before the object of *ressentiment* casts its shadow on the later Victorian ego. By the 1850s the tide had turned against Hegel in favor of Schopenhauer, who although he "privileges the inward in Romantic style, … nevertheless refuses to valorize it" (Eagleton 19). This distrust of the illusion of a fulfilling inner life as a prelude to appropriate social and political action prompted Nietzsche, Schopenhauer's greatest champion before Freud, to assert that "only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world eternally justified" (33). And yet an aesthetics of selfhood informs Austen's simulation of a carefully cultivated inner life whose dynamics, although they run silently in her writing, run deeply as a mobilization and orchestration of selfhood toward proper civil action in order to achieve maximum social output and effect. There is thus a rather uncanny resemblance between how Austen deploys the custom and cultivation of

social capital and Schopenhauer's vision of a will for which "there is no permanent fulfillment which completely and for ever satisfies its craving" (1: 362). For if Schopenhauer writes that "Everything in life proclaims that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion," and that "There is only one inborn error, and that is the notion that we exist in order to be happy" (2: 573), then Austen's notion that "A large income is the best recipe for happiness" (*Mansfield Park* 197) happily answers this pessimism: economic satisfaction as not only a compensation but a necessary justification for earthly happiness. Or as Schopenhauer writes in the first volume of *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851), "*Money* is human happiness *in abstracto*, and so the man who is no longer capable of enjoying such happiness *in concreto*, sets his whole heart on money" (1: 348). Austen shows how one can play the odds to have it both ways.

Schopenhauer posits an irreparable rift between the primary *Wille* and the secondary *Darstellung* of its primordial force, which separation leaves us perpetually dissatisfied with few alternatives: the aesthetic, particularly music, which eliminates representation as much as possible to reveal the will's primordial sway (as Nietzsche will also note in *The Birth of Tragedy*); the ascetic, in which self-denial brings both will and representation to a point of existential stillness; or death, which solves the problem once and for all. Yet even suicide "affords no escape," for "what everyone *wills* in his innermost being, that must he *be*; and what everyone *is*, is just what he *wills*," so that "besides the merely felt knowledge of the delusiveness and nothingness of the forms of representation that separate individuals, it is the self-knowledge of one's own will and of its degree that gives conscience its sting" (1: 366). Indeed, death simply produces more life and thus offers no relief from the will's "endless striving, … [e]ternal becoming, endless flux" (1: 164). The "denial of the will-to-live [*Will zum Leben*] … must always be achieved afresh by constant struggle" (1: 391).

Yet Schopenhauer's "*contemptus mundi*" (McMahon 304), his relentless refusal of idealism, understood as the mind's complex yet inevitable progress toward Absolute Knowledge as opposed to its frail and ultimately deluded perception of the thing-in-itself, speaks otherwise. Eagleton reads *The World as Will* as an immanently Marxist text (19), a cautionary tale about the bourgeois subject. By positioning the subject at the vanishing horizon of representation, driven by a will that at once generates and obliterates his being, Schopenhauer takes aim at capitalist ideology's most privileged category: the individual. In a passage that Nietzsche will take up in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Schopenhauer writes:

> Just as the boatman sits in his small boat, trusting his frail craft in a stormy sea that is boundless in every direction, rising and falling with the howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering and misery the individual man calmly sits, supported by and trusting the *principium individuationis*, or the way in which

> the individual knows things as phenomenon. The boundless world, everywhere full of suffering in the infinite past, in the infinite future, is strange to him, is indeed a fiction. (1: 352–53)

Again, although Austen would never have read this passage, how she misses Schopenhauer's boat resonates here for a text in which the seafaring economy of British global enterprise (and threats to its expansion) figures large. As Eagleton suggests, if capitalist ideology champions individuality as reproducible commodity, Schopenhauer's philosophy reveals behind this simulation the illusion of the ego. Yet as one of culture's more effective training grounds in personal *cum* social felicity, Austen's novels suggest how the tactics learned on this terrain are vital to this illusion's persistence as ideological weapon for a society increasingly accustomed to shock, awe, and trauma.

III

In one of *Persuasion*'s central object lessons in happiness, the narrator, describing Anne watching her sister Mary and Charles Musgrove leave for dinner at Uppercross with Frederick Wentworth, Anne's lost love object and now fortuned as captain of the Royal Navy, writes: "They were gone, she hoped, to be happy, however oddly constructed such happiness might seem" (51). The notion of happiness as social construction, played out through Sir Walter Elliot's or Lady Russell's obsession with rank as a trope for family allegiance, or in the artificiality of Bath society, marks Austen's novels as a social laboratory for inventing the right prescription for marital gratification. This prescription gets tested and proven effective—i.e. made 'real' and 'natural'—in Anne's reunion with Wentworth, prefaced by the more productive and genuine affection between Admiral and Mrs. Croft. Through such an outcome the novel's uncertain future—the brash vitality of an interbreeding between class heredity (the Elliot 'lineage') and mercantile enterprise (which rather cynically weds the military and the economic in order to keep such class pretensions afloat in the first place)—finds its frank, mature, and enlightened purpose in Anne and Frederick's marriage. Their union negates Frederick's explosive attachment to Louisa Musgrove, in which he confuses Anne's persuadability with emotional disability and Louisa's willful nature with entrepreneurial spirit.

By breaking the novel's social propriety, Anne's commentary on the Musgroves projects the fantasy of a dissatisfied future (against Lady Russell's persuasion, Anne once turned down Charles Musgrove's offer of marriage) in which for Anne there isn't enough social profit to keep her in the style to which her training in the profit and loss of her time's discourses of sympathy and sensibility have made her emotionally accustomed. Her reclusive, melancholy life has made her compassionate; but her desire to make happiness

"seem" as natural as possible also suggests a narcissism born of the pressures of domestic contentment, figured through a neoclassical decorum that mediates a more avaricious sympathy. From *Sense and Sensibility* to *Mansfield Park*, Austen's fictions increasingly take up how individuals fixate on and thus exploit the apparitions of happiness. Well ahead of Freud, whose key precursor is perhaps Schopenhauer, Austen glimpses how to accept ordinary unhappiness in the guise of a buoyant if discerning, even wary, felicity that comes with recognizing ourselves as the sum of our illusions. By *Persuasion* we see how the social network formed by her characters' awareness of their environments structures the unconscious of their worldview by and as the language of affect. We thus come to read the otherwise polite surface of social interaction symptomatically—as a volatile terrain overdetermined by the alternate scenes of feeling it displaces, yet that make up its civil veneer. That is to say, Austen's fictions mediate this volatility precisely by thriving upon it; by analyzing the progress of happiness, they promulgate the happiness of progress. Her final novel thus sets a precedent beyond Freud in our current obsession with happiness: *Persuasion* in particular shows us how properly to accept happiness as real. For her the ideological affects and effects of happiness disclose and justify the pursuit of one's inner life as a form of social currency. This training of Romanticism's philosophic mind thus offers a template for how to make Romantic philosophy work differently beyond its time.

In Austen family life powerfully materializes the conciliatory purpose of an education in happiness, as I noted above about Romantic psychiatry. As Claudia Johnson notes, *Pride and Prejudice* "vindicates personal happiness as a liberal category, rescuing it from the suspicion into which it had fallen" (73, 78) by counter-Revolutionary writers, like Burke, who feared the time's fervor for improvement. But Johnson also notes Austen's debt to Samuel Johnson, who mistrusted happiness. By recognizing and assessing how desire drives and complicates the pursuit of an elusive goal, Austen seizes the opportunity to equate economics and social and moral felicity—fortune and good fortune. As she states at the end of *Persuasion*,

> Who can be of doubt what followed? When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point, be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever so likely to be necessary to each other's ultimate comfort. This may be bad morality to conclude with, but I believe it to be truth; and if such parties succeed, how should a Captain Wentworth and an Anne Elliot, with the advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right, and one independent fortune between them, fail of bearing down every opposition? (199)

Here Austen writes happiness as the doctrine of a future (neo-)liberalism. As I have noted, a global presence hovers beyond the novel's domestic spaces.

For instance, Austen's Regency world negotiates the terms for the civilizing mission of progress by figuring Wentworth as both naval captain and captain of industry, thus yoking might to money to produce the Empire's ideal emissary. Via his marriage to Anne the stately measure of hereditary wealth (her inheritance) redeems the mercenary spirit of a burgeoning capitalist marketplace. Moreover, the passage assumes our future complicity in this happy enterprise—"Who can be of doubt?" We are thus asked to suspend our disbelief in the "bad morality" of romance as the dreamwork of liberalism's future, one that creates, "by perseverance," its own "independent fortune." D. A. Miller argues that Austen's free indirect discourse makes us feel as though we are "being read reading" Austen, a "universalized utterance" that speaks our subjectivities for us (3). The urgency of her characters' emotional life, Miller argues, generates an excitement lacking in Austen's own, yet this masterful anonymity has a more lasting effect. For William Galperin, Deidre Lynch, and others Austen's fictions are a tabula rasa upon which culture has traced its emotional life. As Adela Pinch notes, "[t]he subject of Austen's novels … is the arduousness of knowing both one's own feelings and the feelings of others—of knowing, as Anne Elliott wonders about Captain Wentworth, 'how were his sentiments to be read?'" (142). Austen's "foregone personhood" (Miller 92) thus interpolates us into its affective regime, which, in turn, interpellates us as feeling subjects whose dominant mood is a happiness that dominates unhappiness.

The Romantic philosophy of Austen's final novel is thus its desire for improvement. As Anne notes, the "Musgroves, like their houses, were in a [perpetual] state of alteration, perhaps of improvement" (37–38). Written into the domestic spaces of Romanticism's traumatic encounter with historical change is the potential to turn catastrophe into an ideological force of transformation. Such a deployment creates between unhappiness and happiness an uncanny relationship that finds in the former the latter's constitutive possibility. Offering a potent antidote for dissatisfaction and disillusionment, *Persuasion* instrumentalizes the feeling template of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" or Intimations Ode as a kind of Idiot's Guide to the happiness of the philosophic mind. This program for self-fulfillment can't fail because it perpetually feeds, paradoxically, on its own dissatisfaction (that John Stuart Mill was saved from utilitarianism by reading Wordsworth's poetry indicates its felicitous afterlife, like that of Austen's novels, in the nineteenth century and beyond). Indeed, that the novel registers Anne's melancholia, bordering on despair, as mere discontent or disappointment, signals a middling range that dampens affect's disruptive nature, and thus implicitly shows us how to achieve, and thus justify, this diminishment. In Austen's novels, Romanticism's self-examination of feeling trains people how to get happy, to acquire happiness, which becomes the novels' at once salient commodity, prized possession, and most elusive affect. And like all training fields, her novels evoke a competitiveness that separates fit from unfit. Finding happiness means encountering others' less felicitous and

rehabilitative qualities in order to put both in their place. This is the novel's darker purpose: addicting us to the right to be happy.

We can read how the novel stages this habituation, and habituates us in turn, through two key scenes. In the first Anne entertains the feckless younger William Elliot, who attempts to persuade her of the necessity of ensuring the Elliot legacy via its connection to the higher-born Dalrymples: "You may depend upon it, that they will move in the first set in Bath this winter, and as rank is rank, your being known to be related to them will have its use in fixing your family (our family let me say) in that degree of consideration which we must all wish for" (122). Just as William insinuates himself into the family through the slick behavioral savvy of the parenthesis, the syllogism "rank is rank" insists upon its own authority as blindly as Sir Walter's narcissistic sense of aristocratic precedence, ironically signaling his world's redundancy. Also, rank *is* rank, one of Austen's more searing social commentaries. Both "slips" are what William Reddy calls "emotives," "utterances aimed at briefly characterizing the current state of activated thought material that exceeds the current capacity of attention," performatives that "do something to the world" (111), but that signal an emotional recklessness beyond full comprehension. In the phrase "You may depend upon it" the impersonal pronoun at once galvanizes and antecedes the stability of rank: "it" stages a promise that the sentence then fulfills, as if to turn Anne's dependence on family into the reliability of rank. As an emotive, however, "it" also signals the more indeterminate proleptic affect. "It" is both catalyst and free radical in the process of William's thought, spelling the Elliot's potential good fortune through association with social superiors (Viscountess Dalrymples), the social fix that will "fix" their "degree of consideration." But "it" also signifies an elusive goal set adrift in the sentence to mobilize a desire that creates demand precisely by its inability to be fixed. "It" makes "rank" redundant in the wake of an ambient, seductive yearning for what "we must all wish." This shimmering hope for felicity seems reckless, which is precisely how "it" materializes the desire for the desire for happiness.

It is thus telling that money is the passage's absent cause, figured instead through a string of substitutes for its acquisition: birth, rank, education, manners, fortune, happiness. This distracts us from the dirtier business of Anne's retort, in which she claims the higher ground of affable social bonds that reward being "clever" and "well informed" (122). Yet "cleverness" rings hollow, for while it suggests a feeling cultivation, it affects intelligence in the same way that William feigns sincerity. However much the scene at once dissimulates and exposes William's social climbing, it also entrenches both Anne and William as actors in and spectators of this un-masquing. William merely reminds Anne, not that she needs to know the advantage of her family's "connexion" to the wealth and rank of a Viscountess, but that it wouldn't kill her to be seen to simulate a passionate attachment to the idea of this attachment. The importance of her "being known to be related to them" locates her happiness in the internal satisfaction of desire, but only as

this internal revolution is materialized externally through a social exchange fueled by the behavioral efficiency this revolution anticipates. Insofar as the Dalrymples are concerned, Anne happily refuses "being known," which prompts William's penultimate question, "Will it make you happy?" Unable to persuade Anne of the necessity of compromise, William appeals to happiness as the social capital of a behavioral transaction whose emotional payoff can never come. Here "it" registers even more indeterminately as a future possibility that nonetheless promises to materialize in its addressee the very feeling the question anticipates. At the same time it makes of this construction something nearly undesirable for the possibility of its failure to materialize. Ultimately, does William's question demand an answer beyond the asking itself? Anne's lack of response makes the asking at once necessary, redundant, and moot.

In a later scene precipitating Anne and Frederick's final union, emotion is both a visceral and elusive mode of negotiation; yet its discipline and management can be commodified as social currency. The scene's conflagration of emotional volatilities—Captain Benwick's grief over Harville's dead sister; Anne's aloneness; her missed encounter with Wentworth via the letter he writes while "enduring" her exchange with Harville—creates a matrix of loss that demands a behavioral correction facilitated by Wentworth's effusion: "'I can listen no longer in silence'" (191). The letter articulates passion as a contraband sentiment that would, if spoken, revolutionize the novel's social order. The epistolary, however, maintains a detached propriety that at once displaces and re-writes Anne and Frederick's traumatic past in the language of "real" feeling. By channeling the dangerous contingency of affect through a scene of writing (by Frederick) and then reading (by Anne), Austen turns true feeling into ideological affect and effect. Wentworth's true feelings are beside the point, so long as he effectively dramatizes them and thus persuades us they are genuine: "'I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach. You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope. Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone forever'" (191). He and Anne are shown to have true feelings by showing us how they show themselves to have—to express, but also to display—sentiment. Here the novel shows how to curb frank but undisciplined enthusiasms, as when the Musgrove "girls were wild for dancing" or the "young people were all wild to see Lyme," or when Louisa Musgrove bashes her head on the Cobb right after her "burst" of "raptures of admiration and delight" about the Royal Navy's "friendliness," "brotherliness," "openness," and "uprightness" (43, 79, 91, 83). Because her outburst is unconscious and unpremeditated, it doesn't properly gauge how others will be affected by its happiness. Frederick's outpouring *does*, and thus has the desired effect of knocking Anne off balance with its "overpowering happiness" and destroying the "tranquility" of emotion that is the novel's defense against the dangers of hope. Now Anne can respond, "Such a letter was not to be recovered from" (191), invoking a sense of shock and awe that points to the novel's tension, as Nina

Auerbach notes, between revolution and evolution in Anne's inner life as a reflection of the world at large. This mirroring is the novel's response to the times' mood swing between the thrill of catastrophe and the assurance of progress, in which Malthusian disaster becomes vital to social evolution.

Although Anne seems susceptible to the viral feeling of happiness, we also know she has immunized herself all along, all the more to welcome the attack when it hits, which in turn makes her glad to infect others who deserve the gift: the disadvantaged Mrs. Smith and the re-persuadable Lady Russell. Anne knows that Sir Walter has "vanity … to make him really happy" (200). On William, however, her happiness has a catastrophic effect: "Anne's engagement … deranged his best plan of domestic happiness" (201). Surely William doesn't deserve Anne's (good) fortune; yet foiling "his best plan" isn't enough. Anne's happiness must have a toxic effect, as if to counteract a further madness against which she will have to steel herself: "She gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance" (203). Happiness manages a nervous domestic economy in order to grant immunity against an inevitable external violence. Unlike the earlier scene between William and Anne, she is now happy to be victimized by happiness. The final scene thus re-stages how happiness truly works in the earlier scene precisely in order to avoid (i.e. to overcome) the traumatic effects of hope. Once again, to paraphrase Auerbach, the novel thus demonstrates how revolution and evolution sustain one another. When Mrs. Croft "coolly giv[es] the reins a better direction" (78) than Admiral Croft and thus averts the disaster of hitting "the post," a quiet yet breathtakingly swift revolution in gender and class reconstitutes disaster as an evolution in feeling. Admiral Croft says that Wentworth's finding a wife will come from his "'luck to live to another war,'" which violence will "'make [Wentworth] very thankful to any body that will bring him his wife,'" perhaps even one of the privateering ships with which the Empire was doing clandestine business (60). Like Ricardo's ruin or Malthus's natural disaster, catastrophe begets progress. Wentworth's account of the haphazard way he attained his first Royal Navy commission, as an allegory for how the Empire conducts itself, produces a vicarious frisson in his audience that Croft seems compelled to leaven: "'Lucky fellow to get her!'" (57). Wentworth replies, "'I felt my luck admiral, I assure you,'" as if feeling the contingency of happiness makes it productive for all.

For Sara Ahmed the "hap of happiness then gets translated into something good," making happiness an "anticipatory causality" that "something good" *will* happen (30, 40). At once deeply felt, interpersonal, and anonymous, happiness elicits what Jacques Khalip calls an "ambient attention" (165) to one's surroundings. One's habituation to happiness orchestrates a contraband relationship between violence and civility that structures how subjects feel and feel about others and their environment. Such potentially catastrophic giddiness, one enduring legacy of the restless temperament of

the Romantic mind that the Victorians sought to correct, is symptomatic of the time's volatility. This sense of imminent threat attunes individuals to an immanent crisis that continually feeds the project of social amelioration, which Schopenhauer's philosophy will read as an "ambient" *ressentiment* that defines the very nature of our existence as finding ourselves perpetually adrift. *Persuasion* takes back the lead by showing us a society that accustoms us to desire happiness by making a "triumph" of our dissatisfaction and disillusionment. The novel thinks well past Victorian anxieties about Romantic excess to a future horizon of a society that makes a spectacle of feeding upon its own sobering impulses, a philosophic mind addicted to the impossibility of its own self-fulfillment.

NOTE

1. It seems equally unlikely that Schopenhauer would have read Austen, although the first of Austen's novels to be published in German was *Persuasion* in 1822. See Mandal and also Dow. I thank Deidre Lynch for pointing me in their direction.

WORKS CITED

Ahmed, Sara. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

Auerbach, Nina. "O Brave New World: Evolution and Revolution in *Persuasion*." *Jane Austen: Critical Assessments*. Vol. 4. Ed. Ian Littlewood. Mountfield, UK: Helm Information, 1998. 482–96. Print.

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. Ed. Kathryn Sutherland. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

———. *Persuasion*. Ed. James Kingley. Intro. Deidre Shauna Lynch. New York: Oxford World Classics, 2004. Print.

Castiglia, Christopher. *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981. Print.

Dow, Gillian. "The Uses of Translation: The Global Jane Austen." *Uses of Austen: Jane's Afterlives*. Eds. Gillian Dow and Clare Hanson. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 154–74. Print.

Eagleton, Terry. "Schopenhauer and the Aesthetic." *Signature* 1 (1989): 149–69. Print.

Faflak, Joel. "The Difficult Education of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*." *Keats–Shelley Journal* 58 (2009): 53–78. Print.

Galperin, William. *The Historical Austen*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2003. Print.

Garofalo, Daniela. *Manly Leaders in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*. Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2008. Print.

Johnson, Claudia L. *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s—Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. Print.

Keats, John. *Poems of John Keats*. Ed. Jack Stillinger. Cambridge, MA: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1978. Print.
Khalip, Jacques. *Anonymous Life: Romanticism and Dispossession*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.
Lynch, Deidre Shauna ed. *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000. Print.
Mandal, Robert. "Austen's European Reception." *A Companion to Jane Austen*. Eds. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. 422–33. Print.
McMahon, Darrin M. *Happiness: A History*. New York: Atlantic Monthly P, 2006. Print.
Miller, D. A. *Jane Austen, or: The Secret of Style*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. Print.
Pfau, Thomas. *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790–1840*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005. Print.
Pinch, Adela. *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*. Stanford, NY: Stanford UP, 1995. Print.
Porter, Roy. *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*. London: Allen Lane, 2001. Print.
Rajan, Tilottama. *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980. Print.
Reddy, William. *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.
Schopenhauer, Arthur. *Parerga and Paralipomena*. 2 vols. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1974. Print.
———. *The World as Will and Representation*. 2 vols. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. New York: Dover, 1958. Print.
Scull, Andrew. "Psychiatry and Social Control in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *History of Psychiatry* 2 (1991): 149–69. Print.
Shelley, Percy. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*. 2nd ed. Eds. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat New York: Norton, 2002. Print.
Soni, Vivasvan. *Mourning Happiness: Narrative and the Politics of Modernity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2010. Print.
Wordsworth, William. *Poetical Works*. Ed. Thomas Hutchinson. Rev. edn. Ernest de Selincourt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981. Print.
———. *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*. Eds. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill. New York: Norton, 1979. Print.

10 Subjectivity and Despair in Blake and Kierkegaard

Laura Quinney

A counter-culturalist in his own time, William Blake characterized Enlightenment and empiricist thought as a "Science" of "Despair." By this, he meant in part that the reductive account of the subject in empiricism leads the subject to despair of itself—or rather endorses the inevitable despair of itself to which the subject is by its nature tempted. More generally, he meant that the new scientistic bias of his times had depressed the value of subjective experience and expression, and hence had left the subject in a void, despairing of itself. Later in the nineteenth century, Søren Kierkegaard, "the last romantic,"[1] was moved by the same opposition to the rising prestige of "objectivity" in European thought, and he too believed that neglect of subjective experience exacerbates the subject's bewilderment about itself, a bewilderment which stalls it in despair, whether it knows it is in despair or not.

Blake and Kierkegaard share a reaction against the dominant paradigm of their historical moment: the privileging of "objectivity," which they believed was being promoted at the expense of evaluative attention to subjective experience, and thus, at the expense of increasing the subject's despair.[2] Blake's prophetic books launch a sustained critique of what he called the "Six thousand years" of Western philosophy, history and culture (including both the Greeks and the Christians) for worsening the paranoid isolation of the subject, and he criticized the scientific and philosophical consensus of his own time (empiricism and materialism) for deepening the problem still further. Kierkegaard mocked the trivialization of Christianity over the centuries and what he found to be the wrong-headed "scienticism" of the Danish Hegelians' system-building, the philosophical consensus of his own time and place. As James Rovira argues, Kierkegaard, like Blake, saw himself as contending against "the objectification of the human" (30).

For Kierkegaard "objective" discourse has no existential purchase, and cannot address, much less answer, the phenomenological and existential questions that dominate subjective life.[3] In fact, the point is not to find answers, but to deepen and intensify one's interiority, to "become subjective," which, strangely, does not mean to become more one's self. Kierkegaard's antidote to despair, "becoming subjective," is similar to Blake's, which involves "Turning Inward … away from Self" (313; *The Four Zoas;* pl. 23, l. 1) to open a visionary, infinite "Center" within. Self, rather than subjectivity,

is in both the source of despair; and the two thinkers share the intuition that a more radical inwardness, subjectivity without self, is the cure. They discover human subjectivity as singularity that resists reduction to atom, ego, or brain; and they find, too, that it can only avert its natural despair by means of this resistance. The antidote to despair that each offers is not only similar, but similarly based on a reassertion of the critical claims of subject-life. Their own provocative and innovative writing styles—"poetic" in Kierkegaard, idiolectic in Blake—reassert these claims in a formal mode, substituting symbol and evocation for treatise.

Blake and Kierkegaard study how the "self" can misconstrue itself, fasten upon the wrong definition or expression of its nature and powers, and in misconstruing itself, drive itself deeper into despair. They also give parallel accounts of the way in which this misconstruction is motivated. It is not an accident, or a mistake, but a willful flight from an unwelcome task. In Blake, the error takes the form of entrenching identity or ego in a futile project of self-defense. In Kierkegaard, too, we have to overcome our innate resistance to abandoning self-assertion in order to overcome despair. The accent here has to be on "innate," or what I have been calling "natural"; despair in Blake and Kierkegaard is a constitutive feature of subjectivity. It arises inevitably out of the nature of human subjectivity, and can only be overcome by transcending what is natural, by working in a certain way, against oneself. It requires what Blake calls, with all deliberate paradox, "Self-Annihilation."

I

What Kierkegaard terms "despair" is the self's disappointment with itself. In *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard identifies despair as the essential disease of the self, that is, the "disequilibrium" that every self suffers in virtue of being a self. Every (unredeemed) self is in despair because it cannot stand to be what it is—this specific self, inescapable, unavoidable, which did not choose itself nor bring itself into being. The self is affronted by its own nature. There are two manifestations of this affront, two possible reactions. It is an affront to the self that it is stuck with being the self that it is—that it cannot escape itself, that it cannot will itself to be other. It is also an affront that it did not make itself, that it did not will itself to be, and that it is instead "derived"—established or made by another agency, namely, "God." In both cases the self is made to confront a fundamental incapacity of will, a failure of power, integrity, and self-determination.

The self does not want to be this unselfmade and unself-making self. Therefore, despair in the "strict sense" takes two forms: "in despair not to will to be oneself" and "in despair to will to be oneself." (A third form, "in despair not to be conscious of having a self," is a preliminary stage to despair proper.) "In despair not to will to be oneself" means to fail or refuse to will to be oneself. We detect something of a paradox here, since the self is

grieved (so we've been told) precisely in so far as it did not will to be itself. How can it then will to be itself, and further, why must it? Kierkegaard would answer: to will to be itself is to embrace its being as it actually is, this particular unwilled self, and the only way to transcend despair is to will to be oneself in this way. There are many techniques for evading such self-acknowledgement. For the self longs to skirt its humbling—a diminishment in its conception of itself—of what it is or at least what it desires to and ought to be able to be. In the second form of despair proper, which represents an "intensification" of the first, the self not merely refuses to will to be itself, but actively balks at the thought of being this diminished self. Instead it wills to be a self of its own making (not the one it actually is). This form of despair incorporates pride and defiance. We recognize it as Byronic, but Kierkegaard thinks that Stoicism typifies it as well. The only cure for despair is faith, which entails an acceptance of the humiliation of the self: faith is "that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself rests transparently in God" (82), where God is understood to be "the power that established it" (14).

What Kierkegaard calls its "derived" nature spells the passivity and belatedness of the self. We do not need to follow Kierkegaard's theology to appreciate the power of his psychological analysis: he isolates an instability in the self, which is in fact constitutive of being a self. Affectively, this instability registers as anxiety and "despair." This instability is a conflict between will and feeling: the self's will to be autonomous and self-determining over against its feeling of belatedness and passivity. Perhaps for "feeling" we might say "awareness" or "intuition"; "knowledge" seems too strong a word. Or we might want to use a fuller-scale language of self-division—one part of the self blinding itself to another—so as to accommodate the forms of self-evasion and self-deception Kierkegaard analyses. In any case, the self, embattled over its own belatedness, as it is condemned by its nature to be, cannot know peace.

The words Kierkegaard uses to describe this constitutive dysfunction are "misrelation" and "disequilibrium." In his famously tortuous definition, "the self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself" (13). A human being combines antithetical features: temporal and eternal, psychical and physical, free and conditioned. However, the self is not the synthesis of these features; it is a relation to the relation that is the synthesis. But this hyper-relation (let us call it) is a dawning consciousness, which when it arrives necessarily knows that it did not create the synthesis, nor itself as a relation to the synthesis. Therefore, it must also "relate itself to that which established the entire relation." In "relating itself to itself," it "relates itself to another."

And here its troubles begin. If, says Kierkegaard, it did not have to relate itself to another (understand: relate its being to an agency other than its own) then there would be only one form of despair: not to will to be itself, to

shirk being a self, "to will to do away with oneself." In this form of despair, there are only two alternatives: to be or not to be. However, because the self can recognize that it does not owe its being to itself, but to another, because it can "relate itself to another," it can resent the passive self it was created to be, repudiate it, and seek to be another self of its own creation. Such self-creation is not possible of course; it is a fantasy, because, as Kierkegaard says in his critique of Stoicism, no actual self-relation can be achieved in this way: the self trying to turn itself into something it is not "constantly relates itself to itself only by means of imaginary constructions" (68). The difference occurs between wanting or trying not to be a self, and wanting to, trying to, be some other self. Instead of seeking to shirk being a self, the second form of despair pursues a dream self. And yet, in so far as one is conscious of having a self, one cannot by any means rid oneself of *this* self. You toss and turn in yourself as in a seamless pouch. To will to be oneself, "is an expression for the complete dependence of the relation (of the self), the expression for the inability of the self to arrive at or to be in equilibrium and rest by itself" (14). The self cannot abide or live at ease with what it is, but becomes involved in a dynamic struggle for unattainable self-disenfranchisement.

The struggle feeds upon itself. As Kierkegaard describes the disappointment of a man "who wanted to be Caesar," "He would not have become himself by becoming Caesar but would have been rid of himself, and by not becoming Caesar he despairs over not being able to get rid of himself. … The despair has inflamed something that cannot burn or be burned up in the self" (19). There is something inextinguishable in the self, and in despair the inextinguishable thing is awakened, irritated, enlarged. What is inextinguishable in the self is the very thisness of *this* self. Despair inflames the quiddity of the self precisely because despair is trying to dispose of it or supplant it, neither of which is possible, and therefore despair can only chaff against it in incurable frustration, engrossing the presence of the ineradicable. Despair enlarges itself because it brings upon itself increasingly greater awareness of what it is that it is trying to get rid of, but cannot. "The inability of despair to consume him … is precisely what keeps the gnawing alive and keeps life in the gnawing, for it is precisely over this that he despairs: that he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot reduce himself to nothing" (19). The more in his despair he wills not to be himself, the more he encounters the recalcitrant quiddity of himself. The self trying to rid itself of itself only succeeds in becoming more self-conscious, more itself. Kierkegaard emphasizes how quixotic this struggle is when he uses the disturbing metaphor of being "nailed" to oneself:

> No matter how much the despairing person avoids it, no matter how successfully he has completely lost himself (especially in the form of despair that is ignorance of being in despair) and lost himself in such a manner that the loss is not at all detectable—eternity nevertheless will make it manifest that his condition was despair and will nail him to

> himself so that his torment will still be that he cannot rid himself of his self, and it will become obvious that he was just imagining that he had succeeded in doing so. Eternity is obliged to do this, because to have a self, to be a self, is the greatest concession, an infinite concession, given to man, but it is also eternity's claim upon him. (21)

Elsewhere Kierkegaard writes of being "nailed" to servitude "in a Promethean way" (70), but one thinks inevitably of the Crucifixion. Both associations bring to mind a futile writhing, and that certainly seems appropriate to Kierkegaard's view of the experience of being a self. One craves "rest," the opposite of the "disequilibrium" endemic to being a self. The self cannot calm its own unrest but it can come to "rest transparently in God."[4]

This inextinguishable thing is not to be confused with the immortality or uniqueness of the soul. It means: my being now, which is by definition strictly *mine*.[5] And neither is it to be confused with the Cartesian cogito. Kierkegaard explicitly distinguishes his argument from Descartes's later in *The Sickness Unto Death*, when he mocks the "speculative" character of the *cogito*: "With respect to 'the single individual,' speculation, if it is consistent, must make light of being a single individual … . If it cares to do anything along this line, it must say to the individual: Is this anything to waste your time on? Forget it! To be an individual human being is to be nothing! Think—then you are all mankind: *cogito ergo sum*" (119). He faults Descartes for dematerializing the particularity of consciousness, turning *this* consciousness into the general subject, representative of imperial "mind," with all its prerogatives. (Whereas the task and the terror is to be merely oneself, naked "before God.") In another passage, while critiquing the Socratic view that sin is ignorance, and that knowing right means doing right, Kierkegaard says that Descartes follows a similar Greek "ideality" in assuming that "to think is to be." Descartes treats the self as if it were transparent to itself, eliding the psyche, with its obscurity, its ambivalence, its divided will. The psyche is an obstacle that separates knowing from doing. Between self and self an opacity intervenes. The "transparency" with which it may rest in God means, among other things: without the "cloudiness" and "blurriness"—as Kierkegaard describes it—of evasion and self-deception.[6]

In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard adopts a new term to describe this predicament: he exchanges the reifying language of the "self" for the broader term "subjectivity," thus avoiding the logical tangles involved in discussions of the relation of self to self. His fundamental point, however, remains the same: the human subject is born with the task of becoming itself, coming to grips with what it actually is. Otherwise it leads only an imaginary life—in flight, in ignorance, in defiance. It does not know truth, reality or the good. "In order to study the ethical, every human being is assigned to himself" (141). I must "concentrate in myself," think what my being means for me, and what it requires of me. "The development of subjectivity consists precisely in this, that he, acting, works through himself in

his thinking about his own existence" (169). "[T]ruly to become a subject" (131) entails the pursuit of a "radical inwardness."

Thus there is a means for the self to own itself—to "become itself," in Kierkegaard's phrase—and it is the proper "task" of every self to undertake to do so, but the inclination of the self is to shirk this task (and hence to wind up in despair). "To become oneself is to become concrete" (29–30), or as Kierkegaard defines it later, to become "infinitely … responsible for [one's] actual self" (55). This seems to mean (paradoxical as it sounds), to "become spirit," to acknowledge "eternity's claim" upon you in so far as you have a self (27), to embrace "the staggering reality a self has" (114), and thus to know yourself as this naked self, this "existing individual human being," standing alone, eternally, before its Maker. Why does the self shirk this task? Is it so terrible? Yes, it is terrible. In Kierkegaard's understanding of human psychology, accepting this task is the last thing one wants to do, since it demands the renunciation not only of everything in "the dimensions of temporality and secularity" (51) but also of the self's desires for itself:

> It is generally thought that to be subjective is no art. Well, of course, every human being is something of a subject. But now to become what one is as a matter of course—who would waste his time on that? That would indeed be the most dispensable of all tasks in life. Quite so. But that is why it is already so very difficult, indeed, the most difficult of all, because every human being has a strong natural desire and drive to become something else and more. That is how it is with all apparently insignificant tasks: just this apparent insignificance makes them infinitely difficult, because the task does not clearly beckon and thus lend support to the aspirer, but works against him so that it takes an infinite effort just to discover the task, that is, that this is the task, a drudgery from which one is otherwise exempted. (130)

The task defies the self's instinctive yearning for aggrandizement. Becoming subjective requires, on the contrary, becoming what one is, which is less than what one wished or imagined. Only in the given self is "eternity's claim" exercised, because it is through having been given a self that one is related to eternity. Perceiving this relation to eternity imposes a responsibility and entails a humiliation. No wonder the self shirks it.

It is the vocation of the self to deepen in itself, "to become subjective," which means to recognize that the self has a purchase on the eternal and has been called to account for its existence. The vocation of the self is this "task of becoming itself." But the *task* of becoming itself does not lead straight to the *end* of becoming itself, quite the opposite: the very nature of the task makes it swerve away from its object. The highest, the most advanced form of despair is defiance (despair to will to be oneself) because, recognizing the claim of the eternal upon the self, it takes the task of being a self seriously. Yet in defiance, the self advances only asymptotically toward the goal. In

trying to *make* itself it rises toward its purchase on the eternal while at the same time plummeting away from actually *being* itself. The self's need to clasp the eternal in itself is precisely what causes it to turn aside from the undistinguished actual self, seeking grandeur instead in "imaginary constructions." The deeper and more self-conscious the despair, the more the despair is despair of the eternal, the closer it is to truth and at same time the further away it is from redemption. To put it more comprehensively: despair deepens in so far as the self becomes more subjective, more itself, but the price of becoming more subjective is to become more desperate. "The self must be broken in order to become itself" (65). The deeper the despair, the more it fulfills the vocation of subjectivity, while straying farther away from its end. And yet the alternative—the lowest stage, "In despair not to be conscious of having a self," a stage so primitive it doesn't even deserve to be called despair—is a form of spiritual death that can hardly be thought preferable. Despair is a "sickness of the self" (18)—*the* sickness of the self, we may say—but being sick in this way, the self pursues its vocation. It is a sickness good to have, a sickness that ought not to be cured.[7] The "inflammation" of despair may be pathological, but, dialectically, it is also a state of higher consciousness without which no progress is possible. "There is no immediate health of the spirit" (25). To experience one's subjectivity as at once derived and *this,* one's own, does seem a paradoxical and almost impossible task. But this is "the highest task assigned to every human being, a task which can indeed be sufficient for even the longest life, since it has the singular quality that it is not over until life is over." It is the vocation of the self to grow more and more closely acquainted with "an unrest, an inner strife, a disharmony" (22), to feel more and more intensely its own incoherence and vagrancy, and to long, perhaps in vain, for a sure relation to the transcendent.

II

Blake's definition of despair may not seem similar on the face of it, but at a profound level there is a parallel. He and Kierkegaard both treat despair as endemic to the experience of subjectivity. The pressure to consolidate a "self," and its simultaneous impossibility, precipitate despair. Therefore, despair is an essential moment in the vocation of the subject. Blake's characters express their despair in a variety of ways, and attribute it to a variety of causes, but a reader of Blake can perceive the underlying problem: a state of inner fragmentation and existential anxiety which arises from the insecurity of identity, or uncertainty about the nature and status of the self. Blake's character Tharmas gives the most articulate expression of this form of despair. We encounter Tharmas as a strange, almost formless figure, "Trembling" and "weeping in his clouds," in the opening lines of *The Four Zoas*. He laments that his "Emanations" are "Lost! Lost! Lost!," alienated

from him and full of errant desires: "I am already distracted at their deeds & if I look / Upon them more Despair will bring self murder on my soul." In this state of self-alienation, stripped down to a paranoid ego at war with the whole self, he says: "I am like an atom / A Nothing left in darkness yet I am an identity / I wish & feel & weep & groan Ah terrible terrible" (302). Tharmas can make no sense of what, it seems, ought to be his "self." He feels that there is something substantial there, "an identity," and yet it is also a floating "nothing," without a higher, metaphysical reality, and unconnected to anything else. And yet it is pressing and urgent in its emotions and demands; it cannot be ignored, dismissed as epiphenomena or illusion, at the same time that it cannot securely claim a transcendental reality. The self suffers anxiety about what the "self" is, what its powers are, why it exists, and where it came from.

Blake uses the word "atom" here because he is implicitly suggesting that the materialists and empiricists give a reductive account of subjectivity, and in that way exacerbate the inborn anxiety of the subject. Empiricism dispenses with "soul," and turns "mind" into a relatively passive instrument for processing sensory information. It diminishes us. Substance or reality is the world of matter, and what happens in the material dimension; within this world we are, as Blake terms it, "the Human Shadow." Our humanity, in the form of our thoughts and emotions, is superfluous. In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Blake's baffled character Theotormon "wails" out a series of questions about the relation of thought to matter:

> Tell me what is a thought? & of what substance is it made?
> Tell me what is a joy? & in what gardens do joys grow?
> And in what rivers swim the sorrows? and upon what mountains
> Wave shadows of discontent? (47–48; pl. 4, l. 23–26)

Within the empiricist and materialist framework, the experience of subjectivity becomes a contingent development, an anomaly, and our existential questions are exposed as ill-formed, insoluble, perhaps even irrelevant.

Theotormon wails because he cannot simply put aside his questions. Blake, like Kierkegaard, counters complacent objectivity with a reminder that the existential question is for the individual an urgent everyday question, which no general biological, logical, or philosophical argument—no "big picture" argument—can lay to rest. Something in the self that cannot burn or be burnt up persists in questioning its existence. His Thel exemplifies this quandary. Confronting her finitude, she asks why and to what end she lives. Creatures and things of the world of nature tell her she fits into the biological order the way they do, but this logic does not satisfy her: it does not explain the purpose of human consciousness. Still, Thel strives to live in peace with her physical body—perhaps it is enough that God loves everything in creation, cherishing even the Worm with "milk and oil"—yet her effort fails. Out of her own grave comes a voice

so frightening that Thel flees in terror back to the vales of Har. This voice describes the body in terms that are parodically empiricist—as a bundle of yawning and leaking orifices. Thus Blake reverts to the object of his attack: the theory that has reduced the human being to an organism, the tangible body that is ironically a mere "Shadow" of a subjective reality. The subject craves integrity and immortality, but materialism and its philosophical allies deny these claims. They make a dead end of our existential desires, and thus plunge us into desperation. They leave no room for the impetus toward transcendence. "Immortal longings" cannot be successfully routed, only stifled, and this leads not to freedom but frustration: "If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing, despair must be his eternal lot" ("THERE is NO Natural Religion" 2). The subject is plunged into increasing anxiety and bad faith of the kind from which Thel and Theotormon suffer. The era of the Enlightement has imposed on the subject skeptical doubts and acknowledgements of its limitations so crippling that "[its] Science *is* Despair" (142; *Milton*, pl. 41, l. 15, my italics).

The empiricist philosophy—or any philosophy that reduces the human being to merely "Natural Man"—leads to despair because the human being can find no ground as a merely natural being. The subject cannot simply oppose its own substantiality and reality to the putative reality of Nature—it is doomed to discover its relative powerlessness—but it goes on struggling vainly to assert itself. Yet when it seeks to locate itself in itself, it finds not entity but a chaos. In our "fallen" or unredeemed state—which is, by the way, our inborn state—we experience our internal lives as sites of embattled and conflicting psychic fragments—or so Blake thought. His miserable, mutually alienated Zoas exemplify this drama of internal incoherence. One response to "inner chaos" (Melanie Klein's term) is to defend against it, to bulk up the ego. And so one part of the self desperately clings to the fiction of unity, and to all that flows from it: identity, uniqueness, self-presence, immortality. It is fighting a losing battle, both inside and out. It cannot prevail over Nature; but more importantly, it cannot fully consolidate itself. Blake sees this defensive ego as a tyrannical, repressive, grasping, and above all anxious, part of the self. He calls it "Urizen" (Your Reason), Satan, and the Selfhood.

The Book of Urizen tells the story of the ego's disastrous quest. Urizen, a parody of the Genesis God, splits himself off from the rest of the Creation, rejects it as Other, and then by Newtonian means frantically strives to master it: "Times on times he divided, & measur'd / Space by Space in his ninefold darkness" (70; pl. 3, ch. I, l. 8–9). Failure of mastery leads to paranoia—"For he strove in battles dire / In unseen conflictions with shapes / Bred from his forsaken wilderness" (70; pl. 3, ch. I, l. 14–15). Since control is now paramount, he knows this "forsaken wilderness" as inner as well as outer; he has bred his own contentious "shapes" in his inner world, gone to war with himself, in other words, in order to preserve the dominance of his ego, but he has not won the war: we see him "Dark revolving in silent

activity: / Unseen in tormenting passions" (71; pl. 3, ch. I, l. 18–19). "The abominable void" he has created is "a soul-shudd'ring vacuum" (70; pl. 3, ch. I, l. 4–5), an appalling physical abyss fronting the solitary soul but also the "vacuum" of the soul itself, in which it shudders at its own emptiness. Urizen becomes "A self-contemplating shadow / In enormous labours occupied," but even in his tormented self-absorption, he insists on his own self-creating and self-sustaining identity: in a truly blasphemous mockery of Yahweh, Blake has Urizen declaring, "And self-balanc'd [I] stretched o'er the void / I alone, even I!" (72; pl. 4, ch. II, l. 18–19). As Kierkegaard would put it: "In despair the self [like Urizen] wants to enjoy the total satisfaction of making itself into itself" (*Sickness* 69). Finally Urizen becomes delusional, lost in utter solipsism, wrapped up in "Forgetfulness, dumbness, necessity!" (75; pl. 10, ch. 4, l. 24), plunged into a numbing despair—in Blake's illustration he is a blinded skeleton, curled up in a fetal clutch—while his active anguish is displaced unto an alienated fragment of his being, Los or the "prophetic" side that can still behold greater possibilities. Los tries to limit Urizen's devolution by encasing him in a body, and forging him a tangible material world, but this only results in a further spiritual "shrinking." At last, Urizen wholly forgets "his eternal life."

The Book of Urizen shows that efforts to consolidate identity, to shore up the ego, lead to a death-spiral of increasing passivity and despair. The poem *Milton* imagines a reversal of this process, an undoing of identity and renunciation of ego. The poet Milton returns to life from Heaven in order to dissolve the hold of his identity, which Blake now calls "the Selfhood," and which he links to the historical Milton's religious orthodoxy, self-righteousness and sexism. Milton spurns the "Satan" in himself, denouncing orthodox Christianity as a means of inculcating timid prudential morality and "impress[ing] on men the fear of death … / Trembling & fear, terror, constriction; abject selfishness" (139; pl. 38, l. 38–39). His own goal, now is

> to teach men to despise death & to go on
> In fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn
> Thy Laws and Terrors
> .....
> to put off
> In Self-Annihilation all that is not of God alone (139; pl. 38, l. 40–42, 47–48)

Milton—which is to say Blake—has redefined fear of death and terror of the Judgement as egotistic concerns, superficial anxieties which ought to be "laugh[ed] to scorn." Selfhood cannot be tamed; it has to be eradicated. That is what "Self-Annihilation" means: stripping off what Milton eventually dismisses as this "False Body," this "Incrustation over my Immortal / Spirit" (142; pl. 40, l. 35–36).

In his topography of the inner life, Blake presents identity as an intrusion of outwardness into the inner life, something like what the Gnostics called "the accreted soul," or what we might call the worldly or empirical self. This wordly self takes up a place in the inner life which blocks off access to a spiritual realm that is deeper within. As the narrator of *Milton*, "Blake" has an epiphany in which he recognizes the true nature of Milton's Selfhood: "I saw he was the Covering Cherub & within him Satan / And Rahab, in an outside which is fallacious! within / Beyond the outline of Identity, in the Selfhood deadly" (137; pl. 37, l. 8–10). The elements here are deliberately confused—since the Covering Cherub, Satan and Rahab, Identity and Selfhood are all the same—but the topography is clear: within the inner life is a "false" façade, a mere "outline" or caricature of the soul, and this malign "inner fortress" bars the way to the something higher and more real, though more inchoate, within. A passage in *Jerusalem* brings this inner topography together with Blake's image of the lonely, empty, atomic self of Tharmas and Urizen:

> From every-one of the Four Regions of Human Majesty,
> There is an Outside spread Without, & an Outside spread Within
> Beyond the Outline of Identity both ways, which meet in One:
> An orbed Void of doubt, despair, hunger, & thirst & sorrow. (162; pl. 18, l. 1–4)

Blake's remedy, abandoning identity, means breaking through that inner line, or as he terms it, "Opening a Center." He proclaims that "within [the] Center Eternity expands / Its ever during doors" (*Milton* 131; pl. 31, l. 48–49) and that his own task is "[t]o open the Eternal Worlds, to open the Immortal Eyes / Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity / Ever expanding in the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination" (*Jerusalem* 147; pl. 5, l. 18–20). His pile of synonyms for the visionary realm within — "Eternity," "Imagination," "Bosom of God"—heretically confounds outward and inward registers of transcendence. He concludes there is no division between the Creation and the transcendent sphere of God, but instead only a world of the mind's own making: "Man is All Imagination. God is Man & exists in us & we in him" (664).

However, the task of self-redemption is not so easy as all that, because we have built-in resistance to it. The empirical self puts up a fight, since its very reason for being is to remain itself. In a plangent moment in *Milton*, Blake as narrator breaks frame, turning to the reader for the first and only time, to plead:

> Seest thou the little winged fly, smaller than a grain of sand?
> It has a heart like thee; a brain open to heaven & hell,
> Withinside wondrous & expansive; its gates are not clos'd,
> I hope thine are not: hence it clothes itself in rich array;

> Hence thou are cloth'd with human beauty O thou mortal man.
> Seek not thy heavenly father then beyond the skies:
> There Chaos dwells & ancient Night & Og & Anak old:
> For every human heart has gates of brass & bars of adamant,
> Which few dare unbar because dread Og & Anak guard the gates
> Terrific! and each mortal brain is walld and moated round
> Within: and Og & Anak watch here; here is the Seat
> Of Satan in its Webs; for in brain and heart and loins
> Gates open behind Satans Seat to the City of Golgonooza
> Which is the spiritual fourfold London, in the loins of Albion
> (114; pl. 20, l. 27–40)

"The City of Golgonooza" is the city of art, a refuge of Vision and Imagination, other terms in Blake for "Opening a Center." Though Milton transcends his error in the end, he and Urizen, in their misguided retrenchment in identity, exemplify a temptation that presses on every subject. Fortifying the ego leads only to hard struggle that exacerbates anxiety, but defense of this kind is the instinctive defense. The self seeks to suspend the bewilderment of self-experience, which arises from a felt lack of unity, and from the ever-haunting question: what is the purpose of subjectivity: or, what is my vocation as a subject? The Urizen in us takes the subject's vocation to be self-consolidation, or the pursuit of identity, but that is a suffering vocation in so far as it is vain, the goal forever dancing ahead, unreachably. Yet the ego passes itself off as the real self, and the only solution seems to be to protect it. In Kierkegaard, as in Augustine before him, this consolidating project of the ego amounts to defiance of God, defiance in so far as one is vainly determined to be a self-determining agent. Thus the instinct that leads to despair is a perversion of the will or what they both call "original sin." But in Blake, who is not a theist nor a moral pessimist like them, the instinct is morally neutral, at least to begin with, and in this sense his analysis is closer to Freud's. The Selfhood is a developmental inevitability. Ego bulks itself up in order to cope with threats both inner and outer, and the more it entrenches itself, the more stubborn becomes its will to self-preservation. A vicious circle intensifies the subject's despair. Thus for Blake, self-assertion is indeed perverse, but not because it involves defiance toward God, who does not exist as a separate, transcendent being. It is perverse because therein the subject unwittingly, destructively, entangles itself in itself.

Despite their profound theological differences, Blake and Kierkegaard converge in their analysis of the psychology of—let us call it—existential despair, the self's despair of itself, and in their account of the arduous transformation by which it might be surmounted. Blake's Self-Annihilation is Kierkegaard's "becoming subjective." "Becoming subjective" sounds on the face of it as if it meant the opposite, something like self-consolidation, but I hope I have succeeded in showing it does not. In Blake, the vocation that can be fulfilled, and can be fulfilled now, is that of fathoming one's interiority,

going beyond "the outline of Identity" to "Open a Center," into a realm of reality and insight which lays to rest the issue of the self's integrity. So too, "becoming subjective" does not mean becoming more of oneself, or more "like" oneself, or more steeped in "one's own subjective" point of view. To become "more of a subject" means setting aside identity, the ego or empirical self, to concentrate on being a subject—having a subject-life—thinking, willing, feeling—even being this subject, within this subjectivity and no other, without being this particular person in the world. The subject may have a sense of its singularity without embracing an identity.

Like Kierkegaard's, Blake's antidote to despair combines the individual and transcendent in an unlikely way. He believes that it is possible to participate in the "Eternal Now," a kind of eternity in the present moment, and he thinks we reach it through pursuit of "Vision" and "Imagination," other names for "Opening a Center." But Vision and Imagination remain individual, so dissolution of identity does not entail—what we might be tempted to think it would—a dissolution into a universal conglomerate, or what the Neoplatonists and others called the Oversoul. For Blake the vocation of the subject is to shed all empirical distractions, and abandon all self-regard, in order to reach a state of visionary intelligence ("prophecy"), which is impersonal and yet unique. Kierkegaard wrote: "In passion, the existing subject is infinitized in the eternity of imagination, and yet also most definitely himself" (*Postscript* 197). Blake would have agreed. Again we may wonder what remains to be "most definitely [one]self." It is not one's empirical self, not one's identity, but one's "existing" subjectivity.

This subject of subjectivity, as we might say, in contrast to the "self," can still feel the urgency of needs imposed upon it by the fact of its subjectivity. To return to the predicament of Tharmas, there remains an intuition of self that harasses the ego, or Selfhood, with the knowledge that it is not whole, special or permanent. Something in the self locates itself as a real *itself,* but as an itself that has yet to become what it ought to be. In Blake as in Kierkegaard, we are *tasked* with our subjectivity. We sense that we have a vocation for interiority we are guilty of shirking. For both this is an ineluctable psychological reality, which may be suppressed, distorted, or exploited by any number of charlatans within and without, but which will persist in its call, remaining unacknowledged only at the cost of increasing anxiety and unhappiness.

Their antidote to despair involves radically shifting the self's ground of reference, its definition of what gives it substance. For what the subject needs is not coherence but "reality." Its being a subject, its very subject-life, should seem meaningful and an end in itself. For Kierkegaard, the self gains "infinite reality" "by being conscious of existing before God, by becoming a human self whose criterion is God" (*Sickness* 79). Here—to repeat—the parallel with Kierkegaard breaks down, since Kierkegaard's locus of transcendence is "God," and, in his humanism, Blake would find Kierkegaard's idea of the relation between human and divine quite wrong. Blake's

goal is visionary intelligence, which shares in the nature of "Infinity," and "Eternity." He redefines the "Real Man" as the Imagination.[8] Yet the end for both is the same: to change the criterion of reality, to change the subject's notion of what its subjectivity answers to. Each proposes not so much a permanent "solution" or "cure" as a kind of therapy or practice: a change of direction. The objectivity of the Hegelians and the reductive psychology of the empiricists fly in the face of the subject's needs by denying its vocation, producing a subject divided against itself, in despair willing itself to be other than what it is. Blake and Kierkegaard invite the subject to reorient itself so that its task and its life coincide.

NOTES

1. Lorraine Clark: "Kierkegaard may not be the first existentialist so much as the last romantic" (18).
2. For more on their common reaction to the philosophical background, see "Blake and His Contemporaries."
3. For the individual, according to Kierkegaard, the urgent questions are ethical and religious questions which can only be answered "subjectively"—in terms of what one believes for oneself—and therefore the important "truths" are also "subjective," in other words, of a nature completely different, and in certain ways, antithetical to the nature of "objective" truth, with its ideal of disinterestedness and abstraction from one's own subjectivity.
4. Here Kierkegaard follows Augustinian psychology. The opening paragraph of the *Confessions* sounds the basic note: "our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee" (3). A good measure of Kierkegaard's psychology is Augustinian. For both of them, Christianity is therapeutic: it offers a cure, indeed the sole cure, for what we would now call angst.
5. Readers of *Being and Time* will recognize the fundamental connection to Kierkegaard in the definition of Dasein itself: "The being whose analysis our task is, is always we ourselves [i.e. I myself]. The being of this being is always *mine*. In the being of this being it is related to its being. As the being of this being, it is entrusted to its own being" (39).
6. See Fingarette's chapter on self-deception in Sartre and Kierkegaard.
7. For this formulation I am indebted to Frances Ferguson.
8. From one of Blake's last letters: "I have been very near the Gates of Death & have returned very weak & an Old Man feeble & tottering but not in Spirit & Life not in The Real Man The Imagination which Liveth for Ever" (783).

WORKS CITED

Augustine, Saint. *Confessions*. Trans. F. H. Sheed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993. Print.

Blake, William. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. 1965. Ed. David Erdman. 2nd ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 1982. Print.

Clark, Lorraine. *Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. Print.

Fingarette, Herbert. *Self-Deception*. 1969. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2000. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1996. Print.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992. Print.

———. *The Sickness Unto Death*. Trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. Print.

Quinney, Laura. "Blake and His Contemporaries." *The Blackwell Companion to British Literature*. Vol. 3. *Long Eighteenth Century Literature: 1650–1837*. Ed. Robert DeMaria, Jr., et al. London: Blackwell, 2014. 329–44. Print.

Rovira, James. *Blake and Kierkegaard: Creation and Anxiety*. New York: Continuum, 2010. Print.

11 Thomas De Quincey and Søren Kierkegaard

The Elective Affinities between Romantic Philosophical Autobiography and Autobiographical Philosophy

Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay

Thomas De Quincey's autobiographical writings are characterized by their strongly reflective and speculative dimension, by the presence of philosophical and theological themes hinging on the questions of time and memory, fate and destiny, guilt and responsibility. The meaning of human suffering and man's relation to God are addressed in *Suspiria de Profundis* (1845), in the section entitled "Savannah-la-Mar," which is a theodicy. However, even when at its most complex or abstract, his strongly philosophical autobiography unites intellectual qualities and affective intensity, speculation and passion. De Quincey (1785–1859) was a second-generation Romantic with a thorough self-taught knowledge of Kant, Schelling, and German philosophy. Likewise, the Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) lived at a time when Denmark was strongly influenced by German Romantic thinking (Le Blanc 24–25). He had stayed in Berlin twice (in 1841 and 1843) and attended lectures by Schelling from November 1841 to February 1842, his admiration soon giving way to disillusionment and frustration, however. Philosophy *and* (confessional) autobiography unexpectedly coexist in some of his works, as in De Quincey's, collapsing strict generic boundaries, and inviting transdisciplinary approaches.

Beyond this common generic hybridity and the intellectual and affective affinities between the two authors, what is probably even more striking, and seemingly paradoxical, is the various distancing strategies they employ in their most intimate self-writing: pseudonymity, anonymity, and the use of various *personae* or masks, whereby the subject apparently becomes other and achieves the impersonality of a stranger. Both *œuvres* can by and large be defined as autobiographical but their referential status and "truth" is frequently obfuscated by these strategies. However, this is what enabled Kierkegaard's and De Quincey's writing selves, simultaneously philosophical and autobiographical, to find their most elaborate and heartfelt expression. Impersonality and impersonation (with the adoption of multiple and sometimes conflicting roles) is what paradoxically made them appear at their most enigmatic and ambiguous, but also at their barest and truest.

The title of the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), with its indefinite article and the anonymous foregrounding of one of the author's facets or roles, is a clear instance of this distancing strategy, like the subtitle, "Being an Extract from the Life of *a Scholar*" (emphasis added). Likewise, the title of *Suspiria de Profundis*, though it is an unquestioningly autobiographical text, introduces a sense of depersonalization by focusing on the heart's secret afflictions and by eschewing any direct or immediate reference to the author.

De Quincey started representing himself as a philosopher in his *Confessions*: "I may affirm, that my life has been, on the whole, the life of a philosopher: from my birth I was made an intellectual creature" (2). Conversely, Kierkegaard, or one of his multiple *personae*, recurrently denied he was one. As a matter of fact, the term "philosophy" does not appear in *Fear and Trembling* (1843), which is subtitled *Dialectical Lyric by Johannes de Silentio*. As for *Repetition* (1843), it is called *A Venture in Experimenting Psychology*. Similarly, *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), is subtitled *A Simple Psychologically-Oriented Reflection on the Dogmatic Problem of Original Sin*. Johannes de Silentio, the "author" of *Fear and Trembling*, claims in the Preface that "[t]he present author is by no means a philosopher. He has not understood the system, whether there is one, whether it is completed … He is [in a poetic and refined way] a supplementary clerk who neither writes the system nor gives *promises* of the system, who neither exhausts himself on the system nor binds himself to the system" (*Fear* 7). Likewise, Constantin Constantius, the "author" and editor of *Repetition*, cynically introduces himself as a "prose writer" editing the letters of a "young man" whose "romantic faith in women" he regards as "intrinsic to a poet" (*Repetition* 218). In his introduction to volume V of Kierkegaard's *Complete Works* in French, J. Brun considers that in *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* "Kierkegaard was led to mix very closely fictionalized narrative, heartfelt confession and the strictest conceptual analysis" and that "we are dealing with something that is probably a unique undertaking in philosophical literature" (xiii).[1]

Beyond the question of denomination (is the writer a philosopher?), De Quincey's definition of the genuine philosopher highlights a striking similarity in the two authors' visions and approaches: "not merely the possession of a superb intellect in its *analytic* functions" but "such a constitution of the *moral* faculties as shall give him an inner eye and power of intuition for the vision and the mysteries of our human nature" (*Confessions* 5). The young man's conception of Job in *Repetition* evokes De Quincey's inner eye: "It is impossible to describe all the shades of meaning and how manifold the meaning is that he has for me. I do not read him as one reads another book, with the eyes, but I lay the book, as it were, on my heart and read it with the eyes of the heart, in a *clairvoyance* interpreting the specific points in the most diverse ways" (Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, November 15, 204). As H. V. and E. H. Hong remark, "Of all Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings, *Fear*

and Trembling and *Repetition* are perhaps the most closely personal" (ix) but also his "two most poetic writings" (xvi).

In his 1848 essay "The Works of Alexander Pope, Esquire" published in *The North British Review*, De Quincey had drawn the line between the "literature of knowledge" and the "literature of power" (synonymous with strong affects) but his autobiographical texts, an unprecedented combination of both, could aptly be defined by the phrase "passionate reason" that J. Lippitt borrows from C. Stephen Evans's *Passionate Reason* (1992), when he evokes Kierkegaard's use of an "engaged, passionate thinker who shows that reasoning is performed not in the guise of 'pure thought,' but by finite, embodied and flawed persons" (6). Besides, De Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis* and the fifth section of *Fear and Trembling*, entitled "Preliminary Expectoration"—i.e. driving out of one's chest or heart—, emphasize a similar role of affects and the notion of writing from the depths.

The two writers' productions are marked by the same generic hybridity and the same structural fragmentation. Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) is subtitled "*or a Fragment of Philosophy by Johannes Climacus*" and *Either-Or* (1843) is also known as "*A Fragment of Life edited by Victor Eremita.*" *Fear and Trembling* is divided into nine sections, and *Repetition* into at least seven, the third one itself ("Letters from the young man August 15 to February 17") featuring no less than seven letters. Likewise, De Quincey's *Confessions* are divided into six main sections, the final one, "The Pains of Opium," featuring four entries as in a diary. *Suspiria de Profundis* is just as fragmented, the second section (out of three), "Suspiria de Profundis Part I," being subdivided into five parts. This fragmentation may be read as the textual or formal symptom of the deep-seated melancholy and *angst* of the two authors. Such angst also transpires in the young man's letters in *Repetition*, for instance, although he should not be confused with Kierkegaard, especially in the despair and sense of cosmic persecution the October 11 letter evinces, since "the world plays with [him] as a child plays with a beetle" (202), but the "manager" (200) is nowhere to be found and cannot be complained to: "Where am I? How did I get into the world? Why was I not asked about it, why was I not informed of the rules and regulations but just thrust into the ranks … ?" (200).

The concluding words of *Suspiria* are just as grim: "Death we can face: but knowing, as some of us do, what is human life, which of us is it that without shuddering could (if consciously we were summoned) face the hour of birth?" (181). Both authors had a very early experience of death and mourning, with the loss of several of their siblings,[2] and psychologically tormented childhoods and youths. De Quincey's autobiographical texts are haunted by the ambiguous figure of his mother and his very complex feelings for her, just as Kierkegaard's father (Le Blanc 29–31), or spectral figurations of him, pervade the philosopher's writings. But the mother's or the father's deleterious, if not symbolically murderous, roles are dealt with in very reticent and indirect ways and each is embodied

by mythological or Biblical doubles such as Medea and Clytemnestra, or Abraham. The family histories and origins of trauma never appear in immediately identifiable ways and understanding the texts—why children are represented as the sacrificial victims of their parents, and why the two authors obscurely feel *both* guilty and innocent—requires a form of interstitial reading and archeological reconstruction.

What actually filters through the texts, in the most unwonted contexts, in the form of unexpected images and comparisons, hinges on parent-children relations, as when the young man compares the loss of his beloved one—an echo of Kierkegaard's broken engagement to Regine Olsen in 1841—to Job losing his children: "I have not owned the world, have not had seven sons and three daughters. But one who owned very little may indeed have lost everything; one who lost the beloved has in a sense lost sons and daughters … has in a sense been stricken with malignant sores" (*Repetition*, September 19, 198–99).

The young man is in fact like a surviving son of Job, whom he imagines playing a motherly, nurturing role: "Just as the child puts his schoolbook under his pillow to make sure he has not forgotten his lesson when he wakes up in the morning, so I take the book to bed with me at night. Every word by him is food and clothing and healing for my wretched soul" (*Repetition*, November 15, 204). The very poignant way Kierkegaard describes the melancholy that affected him from a very early age provides another memorable and puzzling example: "In his 1843 *Journal*, he himself ascribes this melancholy to the pressures that from early childhood had been imposed on his soul, so that it was like 'a child wrenched with a pair of forceps from his mother's body, and always remembering the mother's pains'" (Farago 37). In *Repetition*, Constantius presents himself in the dual roles of father figure to the young man ("as the elder I act as spokesman") and as "a midwife in relation to the child she has delivered … for I have, so to speak, delivered him" (*Repetition* 230). This image both evokes philosophical *maieutics* (a traditionally male role) and female life-giving, surprisingly collapsing gender boundaries. It is many-layered owing to its intellectual associations and because it suggests the young man has been saved or set free. It also reminds us of the violent forceps delivery evoked in the 1843 *Journal*.

It is precisely in this sense that Kierkegaard's philosophical writings can be regarded as autobiographical, not so much in a direct and explicit form as in more subterranean ways. This is exemplified by the very enigmatic series of the four scenes staging the moment before (and after) the sacrifice in *Fear and Trembling*, each time with a different focus, presenting Abraham's, Isaac's, and Sarah's most intimate thoughts, feelings and perceptions, and strikingly suggesting de Silentio's sense of empathy or even identification with the characters.

Traumatic resurgence and reticent confession are conveyed by Kierkegaard's poetics, by his recurrent figurations of motherhood (images

of birth-giving, and weaning) and evocations of the pains felt by both the mother and the child. In *Kierkegaard et les figures de la paternité* (1999), Brezis addresses the numerous and overwhelming father figures in the texts. Le Blanc focuses on them, too, and considers that Kierkegaard never spoke of his mother (28) but it would be more accurate to say he never did *directly* and *explicitly*. As Brezis points out in *Kierkegaard ou la subjectivité en miroir* (2004)—thereby developing some aspects of *Kierkegaard et le féminin* (2001)[3]—the feminine, although its presence is hidden, is a paramount dimension that has been under-researched (*Kierkegaard subjectivité* 117). If the feminine is repressed, there occurs a predictable return of the repressed (*Kierkegaard et le féminin* 15). Kierkegaard's two 1843 texts contain odd figurations of motherhood and the feminine. They are not only odd in the sense of "strange" (as when Constantius presents himself as a midwife) but they are also at odds with their immediate context, as in the poignant closing paragraphs of each of the four sequential sections of the "Exordium" in *Fear and Trembling* that repeatedly describe, with variations in wording and focus, the moment "when the child is to be weaned" (the leitmotif sentence at the opening of each section) while the relevant (or expected) topic is actually the sacrifice by the father figure of Abraham. Why this seeming digression, and the emphasis on the sorrow felt by the mother, "because she and the child are more and more to be separated, because the child who first lay under her heart and later rested upon her breast will never again be so close" (III, 13), and by the child, who feels bereaved and "no longer has a mother" (II, 12)? Why the enigmatic conclusion to section II, "How fortunate the child who has not lost his mother in some other way!" (II, 12)? Why the close-up on the denied or forbidden breast, crystallizing frustrated desire, that the mother "blackens" because it "would be hard to have the breast look inviting when the child must not have it" (I, 11) or that she "virginally conceals" when "the child has grown big and is to be weaned" (II, 12)? Why the evocation of the unchanged, enduring love felt for and by the mother: "So the child believes that the [blackened] breast has changed, but the mother—she is still the same, her gaze is tender and loving as ever" (I, 11)? The sequential Exordium could be interpreted as a (very enigmatic) parable, but its emotional intensity and its pervasive nostalgia for the lost mother's tenderness suggest the disguised and displaced expression of an intimate experience through the shadowy, anonymous figure of "the child." The same apparent displacement or distancing occurs when De Quincey seems to write in the abstract about "the deep deep *tragedies* of infancy, as when the child's hands were unlinked for ever from his mother's neck" that "remain lurking below all, and … lurk to the last" (*Suspiria* 146).

De Quincey and Kierkegaard staged themselves in various impersonal roles. The *Confessions* were published in two parts in *The London Magazine* in September and October 1821 under the pseudonym "X.Y.Z," before being released in volume form in 1822, this time with their author's

name. De Quincey recurrently refers to himself in the third person, as *the* or *an* "opium-eater" or as "he": "However, as some people, in spite of all laws to the contrary, will persist in asking what became of the Opium-eater, and in what state he now is, I answer for him thus" (*Confessions* 78). He often changes roles (as scholar, philosopher, opium-eater, ironist, writer, etc.), and he even addresses an imaginary painter (his double? the reader?) giving him instructions in the imperative form (with the repetition of "Paint me"), so as "to save [himself] the trouble of too much verbal description" (60). In this scene, he treats himself in a detached, objectified way as "the next article" in the setting that should be "brought forward": i.e. "myself—a picture of the Opium-eater," considering that if he is to be painted "at all," the painter could do it "according to [his] own fancy" (60–61), so that his portrait remains blank and is only virtual.

As for Kierkegaard, except in the case of his theological texts published under his own name, he created many poetic *personae*, sometimes going as far as presenting himself as the publisher (as with *Philosophical Fragments* in 1844) or the editor (as with *The Sickness Unto Death* in 1849), respectively "written by" Climacus and Anti-Climacus.

What clearly stands out, as early as the 1843 texts, is the self-protective way existence and the self are theatricalized and distanced: "Move on, you drama of life—let no one call it a comedy, no one a tragedy, for no one saw the end! … Because life does not know how to captivate as death does, because life does not have the persuasiveness that death has" (*Repetition*, "Report by CC," 176). De Quincey adopts the same approach in "Introduction to the Pains of Opium" where, instead of presenting the years 1804–1816 in a chronological narrative, he provides a series of paintings or scenes where he stages himself and his life, taking the reader along the gallery of his past: "Now then, reader, from 1813, where all this time we have been sitting down and loitering, rise up, if you please, and walk forward about three years more. Now draw up the curtain, and *you shall see me in a new character*" (*Confessions* 54; emphasis added).

As Le Blanc (112), Clair and Brezis (*Kierkegaard subjectivité* 31) insist, the pseudonymous apparatus of Kierkegaard's writing partly erased his father's name and burdensome inheritance. Some of the letters are addressed to "My Silent Confidant" and the young man remains nameless throughout, deriving joy from this, though: "My pain and my suffering are nameless, even as I myself am nameless, one who, although he has no name, nevertheless may always be something to you" (*Repetition*, October 11, 203). But even if the rejected name (and all it stood for) would not survive Kierkegaard who died without a posterity, he could never fully free himself from it and the only way out to avoid complete despair was ironic distance and humor[4] even in the most tragic moments: "Then the silence is broken, and Job's tormented soul breaks forth in powerful cries. These I understand; these words I make my own. At the same time, I sense the contradiction and smile at myself as one smiles at a little child who has

donned his father's clothes" (*Repetition*, November 15, 206). Constantius foresees a probable outcome—a kind of parricide by the young man—and its aim: "Then it will probably all end with his murdering me in order to confide to me the holiest of the holy" (*Repetition*, "Part Two," 186). Brezis analyzes the "pseudonymous constellation" (*Kierkegaard subjectivité* 120) in Kierkegaard's corpus, focusing on the link between onomastics and the keeping of secrets. J. de Silentio, who may be as silent as a grave in a "kierkegaard" (i.e. "churchyard" in Danish), is indeed the "author" of *Fear and Trembling*.

Pseudonymity represents a form of anonymity that guarantees distance without precluding emotional involvement. In *Repetition*, it establishes a dialectical and dialogical link between the young man's lyrical writings and the editor's "Report," creating an unresolved conflict between *pathos* (life as experience) and *logos* (in the sense of systematic thought). Constantius presents himself as emotionally involved when he claims he cannot adopt a detached, objective position toward the young man, or "calmly [put his] eye to the microscope": "Although as a rule I tend to relate to men as an observer, it was impossible to do that with him. Say what you will, a young man deeply in love is something so beautiful that one forgets observation out of joy at the sight" (*Repetition*, "Part I, Report by CC," 134). However, his intellectual and emotional stances are ever-shifting (alternating between empathy and cynicism) as when, in "Part Two," he remarks that the young man may feel tempted to murder him and concludes, rather wryly: "It is obvious that being an observer is a dangerous position" (186).

H. V. and E. H. Hong remind us that "No writer has so painstakingly tried to preclude his readers' collapsing writer and works together and thereby transmogrifying the works into autobiography or memoir" than Kierkegaard (xi). The *personae* of the two 1843 texts are definitely *not* Kierkegaard but they refract his image as "in a glass darkly."

His authorial technique, namely "indirect communication," in *Repetition* and more largely in his pseudonymous writings, is quite perplexing as it usually rests on at least two either conflicting or complementary narrative viewpoints, whereby the meaning is built gradually and implicitly through their confrontation and addition. But neither is ever presented as true or false by a third party acting as a neutral arbiter. Besides, as Kierkegaard acts like a puppet-master and a ventriloquist, it is always difficult to draw the line between the *personae's* viewpoints or fictional autobiographies and genuine personal opinions or data. Through his use of the *personae*, through his apparent neutrality (as he never identifies explicitly or exclusively with any), the melancholy *and* ironic philosopher abdicates authorial responsibility and authority; he eschews the dogmatism of monological and univocal discourse, achieving a form of safe intellectual and emotional distance by the same token. The ultimate meaning of the texts is perpetually open and elusive. In *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought*, J. Lippitt insists on the crucial importance of pseudonymity, mistakenly seen by some

critics as a mere "stylistic quirk" or misinterpreted as directly expressing the philosopher's opinions (4), and he then examines

> the claim Kierkegaard makes in "A First and Last Explanation," written under his own name and appended to the [*Concluding Unscientific*] *Postscript* [to *The Concept of Irony*], in which he "confesses" to having authored the pseudonymous works. Yet there, Kierkegaard says: "In the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me. I have no opinion about them except as a third party, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader."
>
> (Lippitt 4)

Constantius evokes the farces staged at the Königstadter Theater in Berlin and remarks: "Every burlesque comedian ought to have a voice recognizable from the wings" (*Repetition* 164). However, this is never the case in Kierkegaard's pseudonymous texts where the *personae* and their author may occasionally merge or overlap without our being aware of it. Constantius also describes the *Schattenspiel* (i.e. shadow play) shows "of the hidden individual" in Berlin: "Among the shadows in which he discovers himself, there may be a robber captain whose voice is his voice. He must recognize himself in this reflected image" (156). This is uncannily reminiscent of the shadowy Dark Interpreter in De Quincey's "The Apparition of the Brocken" in *Suspiria de Profundis*. This optical "phantom" or *parhelion* that Grevel Lindop defines as "a bright spot of light near the sun, a 'mock sun', and hence, metaphorically, a 'double'" (*Suspiria*, note 156b, 251), blurs the boundaries between I, you, and he, perpetually assuming "new features or strange features" (157). It is "but a reflex of yourself" and the "dark symbolic mirror for reflecting to the daylight what else must be hidden for ever" when you disclose "your secret feelings to *him*" (156). It is omnipresent but not always visible and when it "mixes a little with alien natures," "his face alters, his words alter," although "[w]hat he says, generally, is but that which *I* have said in daylight" (156).

Everything then, with the shadow play or the *parhelion*, is a question of duplication, reflections and refraction. But what exactly is duplicated, reflected or refracted? Possibly, through a dizzyingly skillful sleight of hand, nothing! Could it be a blank like the opium eater's face in his portrait (*Confessions* 61)? Or, on the contrary, an atomized and alienated self, made of too many irreconcilable and antagonistic fragments, as in *the English mail-coach*?

> But the dream-horror which I speak of is far more frightful. The dreamer finds housed within himself—occupying, as it were, some separate chamber of his brain—holding, perhaps, from that station a secret and detestable commerce with his own heart—some horrid alien nature. What if it were his own nature repeated … might be a curse

> too mighty to be sustained. But how if the alien nature contradicts his own, fights with it, perplexes and confounds it? How, again, if not one alien nature, but two, but three, but four, but five, are introduced within what once he thought the inviolable sanctuary of himself? (201)

And if Kierkegaard is, as he claims, a "third party," and merely the "reader" of his numerous *personae's* productions, where exactly does he stand? What is he, and how can he be told from them? As Brezis shows, he resorts to a series of distancing, transposing, refracting, and even falsifying devices merely offering scattered glimpses of himself but never providing a direct, unmediated image (*Kierkegaard subjectivité* 87). The question whether this dizzying specular game precludes or exhausts the possibility of ultimate truth is a problematic and unresolved one. Could the endless mirror effects, after offering shifting and impermanent images of the philosopher, lead to a blank, and ultimately refract *nothing* or nobody but ourselves?

We should also bear in mind that De Quincey's dark interpreter is dumb (*Suspiria* 155) just as Constantius is addressed by the young man as "*my silent confidant*," which suggests one-way communication, or even a soliloquy. This leads to the corollary question of the readers' status—are they distinct entities, or avatars of the authors?

The reader initially appears to be a genuine addressee, as when Constantius declares in his "Concluding Letter": "Although I frequently do the talking, you, my dear reader (for you understand the interior psychic states and emotions, and that is why I call you 'dear'), will nevertheless be reading about [the young man] on every page." (*Repetition* 230–31) The author-reader relation is duplicated by a very interesting *mise en abyme* whereby Constantius, the homodiegetic reader of the young man, is also theoretically read by a heterodiegetic public.

However, the words the young man employs to praise his "confidant" are suspiciously reminiscent of those Constantius himself used about his own reader: "You do not disappoint one's expectations, for you grasp the finest nuances better than the person himself" (*Repetition*, August 15, 188–89). Similarly, throughout his *Confessions*, De Quincey evokes the ideal qualities of his readers that have "accompanied [him] thus far": "Courteous, and I hope indulgent, reader (for all *my* readers must be indulgent ones, or else I fear I shall shock them too much to count on their courtesy)" (50).

The resemblance between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic readers in the *Confessions* and in *Repetition* is uncanny. A passage from the *Confessions* arouses our suspicions that the reader may after all be nothing but a disguised version of the writer: "You will think perhaps that I am too confidential and communicative of my own private history. It may be so. But my way of writing is rather to think aloud, and follow my own humours, than much to consider who is listening to me" (62). Indeed, the young man remarks about his "Silent Confidant": "There is something indescribably salutary and alleviating in talking with you, for it seems as if one were talking with

oneself or with an idea" (*Repetition*, August 15, 188). He does not expect any answer from him, and even takes pains he should not be able to interact with him: "For safety's sake, I enclose no address. That is the way I want it. Then it is good to write to you, then I am safe—and happy in you" (189). This is confirmed by Constantius himself who considers that the young man "simply wished to pour himself out" (180) and that his own role is paradoxically that of a "confidant *in whose presence he could talk aloud to himself*" (135; emphasis added).

The "Concluding Letter by CC" sows doubt as to who or what was the exact priority of *Repetition* since the interest supposedly "focuses on the young man" and Constantius, addressing his "dear reader," calls himself "a vanishing person" and a mere "spokesman" (230). The end of the *Confessions* is just as problematic: the "judicious reader" is suddenly asked to understand that the sole "object" of the text was "to display the marvellous agency of opium, whether for pleasure or for pain," and that "Not the Opium-eater, but the opium, is the true hero of the tale" (78).

In the end, all this is not so much "indirect communication" as a solipsistic, closed circuit parody of communication. What Brezis writes about pseudonymity and self-address could easily apply to De Quincey: "it is essentially his debate with a fantasized double that triggers off the writing process. … Thus, Kierkegaard's whole work is apparently born from his monologue/dialogue with another who is at the same time himself" (*Kierkegaard subjectivité* 122–23).

Kierkegaard admired Hegel but also objected to his dogmatism as the latter should have regarded his work as thought-experiments and not as set, authoritative theories. Indeed, the models of J. de Silentio in his "Preface" to *Fear and Trembling* are unsurprisingly Descartes (in *Dissertation on Method*) and the ancient Greeks "who after all did know a little about philosophy, assumed to be a task for a lifetime, because proficiency in doubting is not acquired in days and weeks" (6).

Kierkegaard and De Quincey always steered clear from the constricting chains of systems and privileged a very personal, experimental and empirical approach based on indirection and idiosyncratic poetic writing, and testifying to an ever-restless, ever doubtful, ever critical thought in progress. The cruel irony, however, is that the wished-for and desirable construction that could have been carried out was never achieved, and both writers were doomed to other kinds of chains, to fragmentation and obsessive repetition. The ultimate meaning of experience, or light in its "final plenitude," remained forever out of reach. As De Quincey wrote in the opening lines of his 1842 essay "The Pagan Oracles," initially published in *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*:

> It is remarkable—and, without a previous explanation, it might seem paradoxical to say it—that oftentimes under a continual accession of light important subjects grow more and more enigmatical. … It is true that light, in its final plenitude, is calculated to disperse all darkness.

> But this effect belongs to its consummation. In its earlier and *struggling* states, light does but reveal darkness. It makes the darkness palpable and 'visible.' (93)

Likewise, the opening of the "Exordium" to *Fear and Trembling* evokes the "man" who "once upon a time" discovered the story of Abraham as a child, and was haunted by it for the rest of his life: "When he grew older, he read the story with even greater admiration, for life had fractured what had been united in the pious simplicity of the child. The older he became, the more often his thoughts turned to that story; his enthusiasm for it became greater and greater, and yet he could understand the story less and less" (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 9).

De Silentio's ideal philosopher, even when he got old, had a heart "still young enough not to have forgotten the anxiety and trembling that disciplined the youth, that the adult learned to control, but that no man outgrows—except to the extent that he succeeds in going further as early as possible" (*Fear,* "Preface" 7). Likewise, "anxiety and trembling" characterize De Quincey's overall vision of existence. The metaphor of the taint suggests the sense of a metaphysical fatality whereby responsibility and (inevitable) guilt cannot be dissociated: "One earliest instinct of fear and horror would darken [the child's] spirit if it could be revealed to itself and self-questioned at the moment of birth; a second instinct of the same nature would again *pollute that tremulous mirror*, if the moment were as punctually marked as physical birth is marked, which dismisses [the young man] finally upon the tides of absolute self-controul" (*Suspiria* 161; emphasis added).

For both De Quincey and Kierkegaard, this state of permanent doubt and angst led to chronic melancholy, psychological fragmentation, and the threat of alienation. Irony and humor are indeed present in the two *oeuvres* (except in *Suspiria de Profundis*) but they coexist with an agonized feeling and a tragic sense which would have been unbearable without the safety valve of *ironic relief*.

Just as it was impossible to say where exactly Kierkegaard stood among the crowd of *personae* he had created for himself, De Quincey showed himself as alternately (and simultaneously) "I," "he," "you," as the thinking / writing subject and as the object of the writing, as writer and reader, as guilty and innocent, as the "hero of the piece" (*Confessions* 61) and the "criminal at the bar" (61), and in *Suspiria*, as himself and his Dark Interpreter, and as a malicious lunatic at night and his sane daylight victim.

In the October 11 letter, Constantius is in doubt about his own sanity, while wondering what is exactly meant by "mad," and assumes it may be better to "lock [him] up" since "people cravenly fear particularly the utterances of the insane and the dying" (*Repetition* 202). De Quincey's imaginary swing scene in *Suspiria* disturbingly echoes the letter:

> Here pause, reader! Imagine yourself seated in some cloud-scaling swing, oscillating under the impulse of lunatic hands; for the strength

> of lunacy may belong to human dreams, the fearful caprice of lunacy, and the malice of lunacy, whilst the *victim* of these dreams may be all the more certainly removed from lunacy; even as a bridge gathers cohesion and strength from the increasing resistance into which it is forced by increasing pressure. Seated in such a swing … [u]ps and downs you will see, heights and depths, in our fiery course together, such as will sometimes tempt you to look shyly and suspiciously at me, your guide, and the ruler of the oscillations. (137)

However painful, this dialogism or even this *multilogism*—with its corollary risk of disintegration—is what makes the two authors' philosophical-autobiographical texts so unsettling, enigmatic and fascinating, but also so pioneering formally, thematically and ideologically: both are indeed distinctly Romantic but their approach prefigures in many ways (post)modernist thinking and what would, by the late 1970s, begin to be called autofiction.

NOTES

1. All the translations of critical works from French are by F. Dupeyron-Lafay.
2. See G. Lindop and F. Dupeyron-Lafay (about De Quincey) and F. Farago about Kierkegaard.
3. For an in-depth analysis of the two contradictory sides and the meaning of the feminine, see Brezis, *Kierkegaard et le féminin* 185–86.
4. See Le Blanc 68 on the religious and metaphysical implications of humour and irony, or Lippitt 1 and 22 on the close interaction between humor and "indirect communication" (22).

WORKS CITED

Brezis, David. *Kierkegaard et le féminin.* Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2001. Print.

———. *Kierkegaard et les figures de la paternité.* Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1999. Print.

———. *Kierkegaard ou la subjectivité en miroir.* Paris: Editions Kimé, 2004. Print.

Brun, Jean. "Introduction." *La Répétition. Crainte et tremblement.* 1843. Søren Kierkegaard. Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1972. xi–xxvii. Print.

Clair, André. *Kierkegaard et autour.* Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2005. Print.

De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.* 1821. *Suspiria de Profundis.* 1845. *The English Mail-Coach, or the Glory of Motion.* 1849. Ed. Grevel Lindop. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998. Print.

———. "The Pagan Oracles." 1842. *Memorials and Other Papers*, vol. I. 1856. Whitefish: Montana, Kessinger Publishing, 2004. 93–113. Print.

———. "The Works of Alexander Pope, Esquire." 1848. *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, vol. VIII. Whitefish: Montana, Kessinger Publishing, 2006. 1–53. Print.

Dupeyron-Lafay, Françoise. *L'Autobiographie de Thomas De Quincey. Une Anatomie de la douleur.* Paris: Michel Houdiard éditeur, 2010. Print.

Evans, C. Stephen. *Passionate Reason*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992. Print.
Farago, France. *Comprendre Kierkegaard*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2005. Print.
Hong, Howard V. and Edna H. Hong. "Historical Introduction." Søren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling. Repetition*. 1843. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983. ix–xxxix. Print.
Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling: Dialectical Lyric by Johannes de Silentio*. 1843. *Kierkegaard's Writings*. Eds and Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Vol. 6. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983. Print.
———. *Repetition: A Venture in Experimenting Psychology*. 1843. *Kierkegaard's Writings*. Eds and Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Vol. 6. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983. Print.
———. *La Répétition. Crainte et tremblement*. 1843. *Œuvres complètes*. Trans. Paul-Henri Tisseau. Vol. 5. Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1972. Print.
Le Blanc, Charles. *Kierkegaard*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004. Print.
Lindop, Grevel. *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey*. 1981. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. Print.
Lippitt, John. *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000. Print.
Zufferey, Joël, dir. *L'Autofiction: variations génériques et discursives*. Louvain-la-Neuve: L'Harmattan-Academia, 2012. Print.

Part IV
Transatlantic Romanticism

This page intentionally left blank

12 The Tension between Immanence and Dualism in Coleridge and Emerson

Danielle Follett

This chapter focuses upon a specific philosophical tension that is found in both Coleridge and Emerson, between a Neoplatonic immanentism bordering on monism, and a subject-centered, romantic, idealist dualism. On one hand, spirit infuses nature, and humanity and nature are fundamentally akin; on the other, an essential distinction exists between humanity and nature, and spirit and nature are split. Both views inform Coleridge's and Emerson's writings to differing degrees, and their co-presence creates a certain dissonance. Although the philosophical tension is similar in each author, the ways in which each expresses and responds to it are quite different. Equally interesting is the differing degree to which each author found this tension problematic. An increasingly clear, often painful awareness of the incompatibility between quasi-monist immanence and dualist Christian idealism drove Coleridge's development as a thinker, while Emerson's syncretism allowed both views to coexist without creating overly evident or disturbing clashes. Indeed, although Emerson was a great admirer and reader of Coleridge, he did not appear to appreciate the importance of this philosophical tension for the elder poet. Emerson seemed not to realize that Coleridge's adoption of Kantian idealism and trinitarian Christianity partially constituted a flight from the moral dangers of monism, which he had come close to espousing in his youth.

More generally, this philosophical tension lies at the heart of romanticism, especially in the thought of post-Kantian German philosophers Schelling and Hegel, who undertook the difficult project of creating a subject-based monism. Coleridge and Emerson were thus not alone in grappling with these issues. This chapter analyses these tensions, and discusses some of the ways in which Emerson, who, as it is generally agreed, was indeed a Coleridgean, was also not a Coleridgean. It would be impossible to give a full discussion of sources and influences in this chapter, and that is not its purpose. Many excellent and useful studies exist which detail the importance of Coleridge for Emerson's thought.[1] Rather, the focus here is on the dynamic of ideas.

In order to stave off a metaphysical tangle, an initial discussion of terminology and concepts is inevitable, even if it requires an uncomfortable degree of generalization. In speaking of immanence, this essay will focus mainly on the immanent presence of spirit, mind, soul, or divinity within

the world and nature, and less on the question of the immanence of the divine within humanity, which is much less problematic for our writers. In the West this immanentism is largely found in the Neoplatonic tradition, which espouses a dynamic emanationism positing the existence of different concentric strata of being (the One, the divine mind, the divine soul, nature), created and infused by emanations from the One, and all linked through the circulation of the dynamic cosmic power. The divine force being ubiquitous, Neoplatonic immanence may be said to tend toward monism. But it should not be confused with pantheism or Spinozist monism (the identity of spirit and matter).[2] It remains essentially idealist, that is, spirit is superior to matter: Neoplatonism maintains a hierarchy in the strata of being, as matter is the furthest from the divine source even if it is infused with spirit. Neither dualist (i.e. vertical) nor monist (i.e. horizontal), one might say that immanence represents a varying diagonal. This ambiguous status of immanence gives rise to its dynamism: nature is neither dead/evil (dualism) nor alive/divine in its own right (hylozoism or pantheism), but *animated*, suffused with a divine energy. Hence the importance of the figure of the wind in romantic expressions of immanence, as a dynamic divine force that variously descends or sweeps, but always infuses.

On the other hand, the various dualist perspectives found in Plato, Descartes, Kant, and most Christian views, among others, distinguish clearly between spirit and matter: matter and the body are not only inferior to spirit but of a fundamentally different essence, and to some degree untrustworthy, evil or illusory. While the immanentist view sees nature as imbued with divine spirit in its own right, sometimes with a moral force that may redeem humanity, dualism places nature on the side of empty matter requiring spiritual redemption; without humanity, nature is barren. Whereas immanentism considers humanity and nature as fundamentally akin, equally suffused with divinity and transparent to the shining higher truth, in the dualist perspective humans are to some degree foreign to the world, objects are misty or just projections, and possibly the senses cannot be trusted.

Coleridge's early poems are informed by a religious and philosophical perspective that combines Neoplatonism, Unitarian deism, and David Hartley's associationist psychology in a somewhat unstable mix, but one which is marked by a strong immanentism.[3] His poems of the 1790s contain many references to a single omnipresent God; for example in "Religious Musings" of 1794–1796, he writes: "God all in all!"; "The SUPREME FAIR sole Operant …"; "There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind, / Omnific"; "But 'tis God / Diffus'd thro' all, that doth make all one whole" (lines 43, 56, 105–106, 130–131, *Collected Works* 16: 1: 1: 177, 179, 180). The famous question of "The Eolian Harp" expresses his early philosophy of immanence most clearly:

> And what if all of animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversely framed,

> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of All? (44–49, 16: 1: 1: 234)

The immanent divine force "animating" nature, the words "plastic" and "intellectual"—references to the immanentism of Ralph Cudworth, the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonist—and the figure of the wind harp itself point to the strong Neoplatonic grounding of this poem.[4]

However, although the omnipresent God of his Neoplatonist-Hartleyan musings was not supposed to enter into contradiction with the Christian God, Coleridge seemed to doubt this compatibility, even in "The Eolian Harp," which ends on a note expressing a certain guilty feeling for indulging in such fantasies. As Coleridge subsequently abandoned the Unitarian Church for the trinitarian Church of England and explored German idealism, his relationship with the idea of immanence evolved. His thought long retained a Neoplatonic flavor, especially regarding the idea that nature is the mirror or symbol of the divine. However, he came to doubt the presence of an active and immanent divine force within nature, progressively adopting rather the Kantian and classical Platonic view that spirit and Nature are fundamentally distinct. He wrote in 1802, in "Dejection, an Ode":

> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.
> O Lady! we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does nature live … (45–48, *Collected Works* 16: 1: 2: 699)

"Dejection" is the anguished rejoinder of dualist idealism to quasi-monist immanence. Far from representing simply a moment when the wind is down, or inspiration temporarily absent, the poem should be understood as a sharp rejection of the philosophy elaborated in "The Eolian Harp," and not as an expansion of it. It expresses a distinct split between the human spirit and nature, here called "outward forms," a particularly dualist term. The fountains of life are located within the human subject and not in the cosmic wind, and "our life alone" is the true source of nature. The mind is not a passive, receptive instrument, as in the earlier poem, but is itself the source of life and receives only what it produces. As an expression of dualist idealism and a rejection of immanence, the poem—which deserves a much longer discussion—portrays the human subject establishing its primacy and turning upon the wind.

In 1802, Coleridge was seeking in Kantian and post-Kantian idealism an answer to his acute crisis of faith. He became quite attracted to, although ultimately repelled by, Schelling's Neoplatonist attempt to reconcile nature with the spiritual subject, or immanentist monism with subject-centered idealism. In a gradual process of divesting himself of immanentism over the

next twenty or so years, Coleridge maintained a more and more pronounced dualism of spirit and nature. Around 1806, he began to feel that the only way to give a full metaphysical and religious guarantee to free will was by way of the Christian mystery of the holy Trinity, that is, finding the principles of human freedom and agency in the incarnation of God in man, in the person of Jesus Christ. By at least 1825 and *Aids to Reflection*, immanence for him meant the presence of the divine within humanity rather than in nature, understood through the divine incarnation of the logos through the immanence of his personality within every individual. The personal God is the ground of all being, but divinity is not directly present within nature as an impersonal immanent force. Unity became the unity of the triune God, instead of the unity of God and world; divine truth was to be found primarily in the sacred book of the Bible rather than in the book of nature.

Coleridge's reservations about immanence are motivated by the rejection of the heresy that the immanent divine force, or *anima mundi* of the Neoplatonists and Stoics, might usurp the place of the true Godhead, allowing for another agency besides the Absolute and the individual Will. The idea of "The SUPREME FAIR sole Operant" ("Religious Musings") is contrary to human agency, and thus denies sin, atonement and redemption. If the same laws of causality govern both nature and humanity, then the human spirit is not free and man is an automaton.[5] The mature Coleridge thus insisted upon the active, creative imagination and the centrality of will, grounded in trinitarian Christianity.

Although it is generally true that Coleridge's philosophical life represents a gradual replacement of immanentism by idealist and Christian dualism, it would be a mistake to see this oversimplistically as a determined or ineluctable path. Especially in his middle years, the tension between the two views was strong.[6] A passage that demonstrates well Coleridge's turn toward Kantian and Platonic dualism is the following, from the discussion of method in the *Friend*. Poetic and convoluted, it argues unmistakably that nature cannot provide the ground of higher truth but constitutes only a "modification" of the subject's consciousness. Seeking a "ground common to the world and to man,"

> man sallies forth into nature … till finding nowhere a representative of that free agency which yet is a *fact* of immediate consciousness … he learns at last that what he *seeks* he has *left behind* … and at once discovers and recoils from the discovery … [that nature is] a modification of his own being. (*Collected Works* 4: 1: 508–09)[7]

Dangerously close to subjectivist idealism—a view never seriously espoused by Coleridge—this passage betrays a certain disappointment in being unable to find a common ground between nature and humanity. Coleridge's desire for monism is strong, yet it yields before the dualist idealism he is progressively adopting.

Coleridge also made or attempted to make revisions of his own works after publication, in order to correct what he saw as their tendency toward pantheism. Alongside this gradual turn toward dualist idealism, *The Friend* includes many immanentist passages, such as when he speaks of "the light, the substance shining through [existence] … [E]xistence is its own predicate … [I]t is an eternal and infinite self-rejoicing … It is absolute …" (*Collected Works* 4: 1: 520, 521). Emerson, who was very fond of this essay, would not have seen the note Coleridge sent to friends in 1818, providing an addition to be inserted here, in order

> to preclude all suspicion of any leaning towards Pantheism, in any of its forms. I adore the living and personal God, whose Power indeed is the *Ground* of all *Being* … but who may not without fearful error be identified with the universe… . (4: 1: 522, n. 1)

Similarly, Coleridge later distanced himself from the Neoplatonic light "shining through" nature, described in the *Statesman's Manual* (1816). Upon looking at "the vegetable creation," he had written,

> it seems as if the soul said to herself: from this state hast *thou* fallen! Such shouldst thou still become, thy Self all permeable to a holier power! Thy Self at once hidden and glorified by its own transparency, as the accidental and dividuous in this quiet and harmonious object is subjected to the life and light of nature which shines in it, even as the transmitted power, love and wisdom, of God over all fills, and shines through, nature! But what the plant *is*, by an act not its own and unconsciously—*that* must thou *make* thyself to *become*!" (6: 71)

This is part of a passage that, in one of his copies and at an unknown date, Coleridge bracketed, noting: "At the time, I wrote this Work, my views of *Nature* were very imperfect and confused. But for this whole passage within the crotchets, *una litura* [an erasure] would be the best amendment. S.T.C." (6: 71, n. 6). Emerson would have been quite disappointed. Coleridge rejects his earlier idea that nature is permeated with divine light, and especially denies that nature should be a moral model. Indeed, he wrote in 1818 that nature is "without Morality" (5: 2: 221).

By 1825 in *Aids to Reflection*, divine force had drained out of nature, now demoted to the inferior status it holds in Kantian dualism: "the Power which we call Nature, may be thus defined: a Power subject to the Law of Continuity … which law the human understanding … can *conceive* only under the form of Cause and Effect" (*Collected Works* 9: 267). "Whatever is representable in the forms of Time and Space, is Nature" (9: 80). Nature thus became identified with the realm of cause and effect, accessed simply by the understanding, and not by the spiritual reason. Spirit and nature are radically separated: "and by *spiritual* I do not pretend to determine *what* the

will *is*, but what it is *not*—namely, that it is not Nature" (9: 80). Coleridge criticizes immanence itself, alongside Wordsworth, one of its prime proponents: "[M]any do I know, and yearly meet with, in whom a false and sickly *Taste* co-operates with the prevailing fashion [and who] would fain substitute for the Jehovah of their Bible 'A sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused …'" (9: 404, quoting Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"). This view "reduc[es] the Creator to a mere Anima Mundi: a scheme that has no advantage over Spinosism [*sic*] but its inconsistency" (9: 403); such people have "been educated to understand the Divine Omnipresence in any sense rather than the alone safe and legitimate one, the presence of all things to God!" (9: 404–05).

Coleridge became very clear at the end of his life that he found immanence to be a form of heresy. In 1827, he wrote: "Life begins in detachment from Nature, and ends in union with God" (*Collected Works* 12: 3: 417). In his posthumously published *Opus Maximum*, he criticizes Neoplatonism directly and at length, accusing it of "a perfect confusion of the Deity with the Universe" (15: 260). The Neoplatonism of "Schelling and his followers," which had once so attracted him, "attempt[s] to clothe the skeleton of the Spinozistic pantheism and breathe a life thereinto" (15: 205). And, in 1833, the year before his death, he wrote: "I dread even the appearance of an approximation to the Neo-platonic Proclo-Plotinian Scheme & Process" (*Letters* 6: 961). The wind has fully withdrawn.

Given this evolution, it is not surprising that the very Neoplatonic Emerson would write of Coleridge: "His works are of very unequal interest; the *Aids to Reflection*, though a useful book I suppose, is the least valuable" (*Early Lectures* 1: 379). Emerson allowed himself to pick and choose in Coleridge, as he did with others. The thesis that Emerson was a perfect Coleridgean is necessarily called into doubt by such eyebrow-raising statements as:

> Another fault with which he is taxed in this country is his excessive bigotry to the Constitution of the Church of England. This is so apparent and so separate from the general tendency and texture of his philosophy that it will never disturb the student who is accustomed to watch his moods of thought and will skip the unnecessary pages. (1: 380)

Emerson was thus undisturbed by Coleridge's resolute trinitarianism, in fact essential to his thought. He silently resisted the trinitarian tirade he received when visiting the elder poet in 1833, calmly appropriated Coleridge's early immanentism, inherited some of his ambiguity, and eschewed or ignored the later discourse which did not fit his own philosophy-in-progress. Many of Coleridge's strongest statements against Neoplatonism, immanence, and pantheism—made in letters, marginalia or unpublished works—would not have been known to Emerson. Emerson likely recognized that Coleridge's

thought was not homogeneous and helped himself to those parts which he felt resonated most with his own.

Toward the end of Coleridge's life, then, the young Emerson began in his turn to plunge into Neoplatonism. He read some of the same authors who had inspired the young Coleridge, such as Cudworth and Henry More, sometimes led to them by Coleridge himself. In addition, Emerson was influenced by the Neoplatonist Swedenborg, the Neoplatonic translations of Plato by Thomas Taylor, and a host of other authors such as the immanentist Wordsworth, Goethe, and Boehme. Soon thereafter, around 1838, he would begin to read the classical Neoplatonists themselves, Plotinus, Jamblichus, and Proclus. Simultaneously, he received a superficial understanding of German idealist philosophy, relayed through Coleridge, Carlyle, and Frederick Hedge. He was also quite struck by Bishop Berkeley's subjectivist idealism while at Harvard, and was well-read in non-Western traditions, many of them rather immanentist. Coleridge, with all his ambiguities, greatly influenced Emerson, although as Walls notes, "early in the 1840s, Emerson's active engagement with Coleridge dropped off" (124). Coleridge's ultimate rejection of immanence did not seem to register on the younger writer. It at least did not stop Emerson from developing his own strongly Neoplatonic philosophy of immanence whose tendency toward monism went well beyond that of the young Coleridge.[8] His philosophy is far more homogeneous over his life than Coleridge's. One might generalize by saying that while Coleridge gradually evolved from quasi-monist immanentism to dualist idealism, Emerson tangled these up simultaneously in single texts, creating a philosophically unstable but highly poetic tension. Essentially, Emerson makes sallies into dualist idealism, creating dissonance within his general quasi-monism, but comes back always to immanence.

Nature (1836) displays this tension remarkably. Perhaps this inconsistency is related to the "crack in it, not easy to be soldered or welded" that Emerson saw in the essay as he was finishing it (*Letters* 2: 32).[9] The main tenor of the text is one of immanence: "behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present" (*Essays* 41). Its guiding idea is that humanity and nature are intimately related, not sundered: there is "an occult relation between man and the vegetable" (11). The doctrine of correspondences ("The world is emblematic" [24]) is central to Neoplatonic thought, and was probably inspired more directly from Swedenborg or other Neoplatonists than from Coleridge.[10] The spiritual dynamism which pervades *Nature* from the first to the last page reveals the text's grounding in Neoplatonic immanence: "nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us" (7); "the endless circulations of the divine charity" (12); "an instantaneous in-streaming causing power" (47); "nature is not fixed but fluid" (48). Emerson's emanationist view that "The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference" (29) contrasts strongly with Coleridge's statement that nature is "without Morality" (*Collected Works* 5: 2: 221).

However, Emerson is influenced by dualist idealism; he is tempted by its tenets and unsure how it fits into the rest of his philosophy. The chapter devoted to "Idealism" sits uneasily with the others, as he admits: "Let [idealism] stand, then, in the present state of our knowledge, merely as a useful introductory hypothesis" (*Essays* 41). Emerson is responding to Berkeley's, Coleridge's, and Kant's idealisms (Berkeley is named, 38).[11] His description of the idealist hypothesis contains a number of ideas that sharply contradict the immanentism of the rest of the text. Idealism posits a rift between humanity and nature, it considers nature as degraded and inferior to humanity, and it involves a possible skepticism as to the very existence of nature outside of the perceptions of the subject ("a noble doubt … whether nature outwardly exists" [32]). Because of the subject–object dualism, idealism may lead to doubt as to the capacity of the subject to truly perceive or enter into direct relation with objects, and treats the phenomenal world as characterized by illusion, disorder, mistiness, or opacity. None of these perspectives is found in neoplatonic immanentism, which sees the world as the direct, transparent emanation of the divine.

Emerson writes that "whilst the world is a spectacle, something in [man] is stable" (*Essays* 34); this "dualism" (33) means that we become aware of "the difference between the observer and the spectacle,—between man and nature" (34). Rather than receiving or witnessing the divine truth within nature, the poet "unfixes the land and the sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought. … [He] possesses the power of subordinating nature" (34). Through philosophy and poetry, "a spiritual life has been imparted to nature" (36). That is, the subjective imagination, superior to nature, invests nature with meaning—rather than nature already being imbued with immanent spiritual meaning prior to the arrival of the human subject, or possibly bringing morality and meaning to humanity, as Wordsworth felt.[12] Nature is here determined and perhaps even created by the human subject's activity. "We feel that the outward circumstance is a dream and a shade" (37); "[we] esteem nature as an accident and an effect" (33).

This "degraded" (*Essays* 37), constructed, somewhat illusory nature is quite a different "nature" than that which infuses humanity elsewhere in the text: "the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old" (41). This immanentist line would have made the trinitarian, anti-pantheist Coleridge explode in his grave. It also quite flatly contradicts Emerson's own first definition of nature, deriving from his readings in dualist idealism, as "NOT ME" (8), a formulation likely inspired from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* or *Aids to Reflection*, but also perhaps from Hedge and Carlyle. On one hand, humanity and nature are in intimate sympathy; on the other they are strictly divided. Greenham observes this tension: "in *Nature* Emerson is holding together two very different views. … At times he celebrates a unifying spirit, at other times he laments a falling away. … [In the latter sense] he is one with Coleridge, for

whom God and nature are entirely separate" (93–94). Emerson states elsewhere in *Nature* that "the problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty, is solved by the redemption of the soul" (*Essays* 47). Here, he adopts the dualist idealist view that the world is fallen and its grace depends on that of the subject, itself in need of redemption. Emerson does not often speak of redemption, which is not a monist concept. "The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opake. The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself" (47). Here, humanity's subjective state not only engenders the opacity of the world, but also its brokenness and disjunction. Yet elsewhere in *Nature*, harmonious Neoplatonic light shines through transparent existence, humanity becomes selfless, and everything is interconnected: "When in fortunate hours we ponder this miracle … the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own, shines through it" (24–25). The famous passage on the "transparent eyeball" also participates in Emerson's Neoplatonic dynamic immanence:

> Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. (10)

Here, even perception is inseparable from the reception of universal forces which traverse the individual who perceives. Far from the idealist model of perception as subjective creation, seeing is here understood as transparent receptivity. Emerson's use of the concept of reason is also singularly paradoxical. Although it participates in the dualist idealist tradition, famously appropriated from Coleridge's own reading of Kant, and is thus predicated upon the distinction of humanity and nature (it "shows us nature aloof, and, as it were, afloat" [*Essays* 33]), the description of the heightened experience of the opening of the eye of reason is particularly influenced by immanentist Neoplatonism, as "spirits are seen through [objects]" (33).

Aware that these are inconsistencies, Emerson makes various attempts to obviate if not solve the problem. He first states that, whether nature actually exists or not (an idealist doubt), he still finds it worthy of veneration (*Essays* 32). He goes on, in a somewhat Rousseauist recourse, to describe the difficulties of idealism as the "effects of culture" (33). Then he seems bluntly to throw the idealist "theory" out at the end of the chapter, returning to Neoplatonic correspondences between humans and nature:

> But I own there is something ungrateful in expanding too curiously the particulars of the general proposition, that all culture tends to imbue us with idealism. I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it. … I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to man … that is, of man's connection with nature (38).

Despite this apparent abandonment of the idealist theory and after complaining again that "[idealism] makes nature foreign to me, and does not account for that consanguinity which we acknowledge to it," Emerson is unable to discard it altogether: he attempts to shelve the issue by calling idealism an "introductory hypothesis, serving to apprize us of the eternal distinction between the soul and the world" (41). Emerson is clearly torn, and reluctant to let go of idealist dualism, even though it enters into contradiction with his philosophy of quasi-monist interconnectivity; it coexists tensely, uncomfortably with his immanence.[13] Hence the "metaphysical riot," in the words of Stanley Cavell, describing *Nature* (33), or the "chowder of idealisms," according to David Van Leer (x).

Later works reveal similar tensions, although not always so blatantly. "The Poet" (1844) is a very Neoplatonic text, in which Emerson cites Jamblichus and Proclus, extolling Swedenborg, Boehme, and Pythagoras, and describing the receptivity of the poet to the inspiration of the immanent divine: "suffering the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him" (*Essays* 459). However, the next essay in *Essays: Second Series*, "Experience," constitutes a powerful expression of idealism and its related skepticism about the senses. Seeing is no longer a fusion with nature and an abandonment of self to the divine forces in it, but rather "we see only what we animate" (473). This statement seems to echo Coleridge's idealist affirmation in "Dejection." Emerson continues: "nature and literature are subjective phenomena" (487), and "it is the eye which makes the horizon" (487). Idealist terminology of "subject" and "object" informs the essay, while in "The Poet," nature is never considered an "object."

"Nature" (*Second Series*), several pages later, likewise demonstrates such tensions. Most of the essay is characteristically Neoplatonic, describing the interrelations between man and nature in a version of the great chain of being that is influenced by ambient theories of evolution: nature is "a system in transition … trees are imperfect men" (*Essays* 547). A "guiding identity" unites all things, and the monist tendency of immanentism is heightened: "things are so strictly related. … [I]dentity makes us all one" (548). And yet, shortly before the end of the essay—reproducing the structure of *Nature*—an idealist perspective encroaches, as Emerson argues that human aspirations are never fully realized by nature, and that we are foreign to it: "we are encamped in nature, not domesticated" (552).[14] The landscape is disappointing and deceptive: "the poet finds himself not near enough to his object. The pine-tree, the river, the bank of flowers before him, does not seem to be nature. Nature is still elsewhere" (553). The essay here adopts the terminology of subject and object, and "nature" is made to represent an unattainable ideal rather than the present harmonious whole described earlier. However, as the essay closes, like in *Nature*, there is a "but" (554), and unity returns: "we traverse the whole scale of being, from the centre to the poles of nature. … Here is no ruin, no discontinuity, no spent ball. The divine circulations never rest nor linger" (555). Immanence has the last

word. Dualist idealism makes incursions into Emerson's thought, creates tensions, but he ultimately favors Neoplatonic immanence, and remains a great lover of the wind.

It could be argued that Emerson attempted to "resolve" this tension by simply allowing the two views to coexist within an all-encompassing syncretism, as though their incompatibility were not problematic. Perhaps it is an example of his philosophy of compensation and polarity. In "Plato; or, the Philosopher," Emerson writes that Plato was "a sound, sincere, and catholic man, able to honor, at the same time, the ideal, or laws of the mind, and fate, or the order of nature" (*Essays* 636). Willful idealism and pantheist fatalism may perhaps coexist unproblematically for a sound and "catholic" person; monism and dualism may perhaps be embraced simultaneously, for, as Emerson states, "[t]wo cardinal facts lie forever at the base; the one, and the two" (637). However, it is not certain that the dissonance was unproblematic for him. Coleridge, for his part, was decidedly less catholic. Although he also believed in polarities, he would not have abided with the idea that both poles of *any* polarity are simultaneously valid; some pairs are strictly incompatible, like pantheism and Christianity, monism and dualism. The difference of attitudes toward this tension reveals one of the important distinctions between Coleridge and Emerson.

NOTES

1. For recent extensive and detailed analyses of Coleridge's influence on Emerson, as well as complete bibliographies, see Chai, Gravil, Greenham, Harvey, Keane, and Sostaric. While these studies generally demonstrate the similarities between the two authors, Sostaric's has the merit of focusing on their differences as well.
2. For a clear distinction between pantheism and neoplatonist immanence, see Hedley, "Pantheism." I prefer to speak of immanence rather than "panentheism," a word whose meaning is similar but not used by our authors. On panentheism, see especially Harvey 110–16.
3. Coleridge read the classical Neoplatonists already in high school, and Ralph Cudworth in 1795–1796. On Coleridge's early Neoplatonism, see especially Schrickx and Werkmeister. On Coleridge's relation to the Neoplatonist tradition in general, see Hedley, *Coleridge*, as well as his "Cudworth" and "Philosophia."
4. McFarland describes this passage as "an example of pure Neoplatonic Spinozism" (166); however, Spinoza was no Neoplatonist, and this description demonstrates well a fundamental, serious flaw in McFarland's book, the confusion of pantheism and Neoplatonism. On this issue, see Hedley, "Philosophia."
5. In 1794, Coleridge had written: "I am a Unitarian Christian and an Advocate for the Automatism of Man" (*Letters* 1: 147).
6. Modiano writes: "Coleridge held on to nature just as, like the insect struggling upstream, he prepared for yet another attempt to disengage himself from it. At no other time does nature preoccupy Coleridge as intensely or elicit reactions that swing so dramatically from amorous courtship to mistrust as in these middle years of devastating disappointments, loneliness and uncertain artistic

goals." In later years "nature troubled Coleridge less because in a sense it ceased to matter as much …" (204, 205).

7. On the Platonism of this passage, see Vigus 137.
8. Harding's statement seems correct: "[The journals] show that Emerson knew what he wanted *before* he began reading Coleridge seriously" (235). However, one must not discount the importance of Emerson's appropriation of key Coleridgean concepts such as reason and understanding.
9. Harvey writes that the crack is "that between nature and spirit, ontologically considered" (135), which generally converges with the tension described here. Emerson had originally planned two separate essays, on nature and on spirit; see *Letters* 2: 27. See also Packer's insightful commentary on the metaphysical tensions in *Nature* (22–84).
10. The lines from Coleridge much appreciated by Emerson, ("For all that meets the bodily sense I deem / Symbolical, one mighty alphabet / For infant minds") are taken from a very early, immanentist poem, "The Destiny of Nations." According to Spiller, "the doctrine of correspondence between the moral and natural laws to which they apply perhaps owes more to Swedenborg than to German idealism" ("Introduction" xxiii).
11. See Gravil's strong reading of the chapter on idealism as Coleridgean, 97–98.
12. On Wordsworth's importance for Emerson, see especially Keane 125–49.
13. Albanese rightly emphasizes the far-reaching implications of Emerson's inconsistency, between the perspective that matter is "really real" and the idealist view that sees it as illusion. They lead to two different plans of action: harmony with nature or mastery over it (81–87). "Emerson's confusion did not cause America's confusion, but it became America's confusion …" (87).
14. On the relations between *Nature* and "Nature," see Constantinesco 33–36.

WORKS CITED

Albanese, Catherine L. *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. *The Senses of Walden*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981. Print.

Chai, Leon. *The Romantic Foundations of the American Renaissance*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987. Print.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Collected Works*. Ed. Kathleen Coburn. 16 vols. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971–2002. Print.

———. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956–1971. Print.

Constantinesco, Thomas. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: L'Amérique à l'essai*. Paris: Editions Rue d'Ulm, 2012. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Eds. Stephen E. Whicher and Robert E. Spiller. 3 vols. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1966–1972. Print.

———. *Essays and Lectures*. Ed. Joel Porte. New York: Library of America, 1983. Print.

———. *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Ralph L. Rusk. New York: Columbia UP, 1939. Print.

Gravil, Richard. *Romantic Dialogues: Anglo-American Continuities, 1776–1862*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000. Print.

Greenham, David. *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2012. Print.

Harding, Anthony John. "Coleridge and Transcendentalism." *The Coleridge Connection*. Ed. Richard Gravil and Molly Lefebure. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990. 233–53. Print.

Harvey, Samantha. *Transatlantic Transcendentalism: Coleridge, Emerson, and Nature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013. Print.

Hedley, Douglas. *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion:* Aids to Reflection *and the Mirror of the Spirit*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

———. "Cudworth, Coleridge and Schelling." *Coleridge Bulletin* 16 (Winter 2000): 63–70. Print.

———. "Pantheism, Trinitarian Theism and the Idea of Unity: Reflections on the Christian Concept of God." *Religious Studies* 32.1 (1996): 61–77. Print.

———. "Philosophia Trinitatis: Coleridge, Pantheism, and a Christian Cabbala." *Coleridge's Assertion of Religion: Essays on the Opus Maximum*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Barbeau. Louvain: Peeters, 2006. 213–31. Print.

Keane, Patrick J. *Emerson, Romanticism and Intuitive Reason: The Transatlantic "Light of All Our Day."* Columbia, MO: U of Missouri P, 2005. Print.

McFarland, Thomas. *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969. Print.

Modiano, Raimonda. *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985. Print.

Packer, Barbara. *Emerson's Fall: A New Interpretation of the Major Essays*. New York: Continuum, 1982. Print.

Schrickx, W. "Coleridge and the Cambridge Platonists." *Review of English Literature* 7.1 (1966): 71–91. Print.

Sostaric, Sanja. *Coleridge and Emerson: A Complex Affinity*. Diss. Ruprecht, 2000. Print.

Spiller, Robert E. "Introduction." *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume 1: Nature, Addresses and Lectures*. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1971. xiii–xxviii. Print.

Van Leer, David. *Emerson's Epistemology: The Argument of the Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. Print.

Vigus, James. *Platonic Coleridge*. London: Legenda, 2009. Print.

Walls, Laura Dassow. "Ralph Waldo Emerson and Coleridge's American Legacy." *Coleridge's Afterlives*. Eds. James Vigus and Jane Wright. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008. 112–27. Print.

13 Emerson's Philosophy of Creativity

Susan L. Dunston

Creativity is the heart of Emerson's philosophical inquiry and practice. In his first foray into the philosophical essay, *Nature*, he owns that neither the science nor the religion of his day offers "scarcely yet a remote approach to an idea of creation" and, in fact, "are now so far from the road to truth" that a new direction is necessary. He begins his inquiry into creation by specifying his criteria that "a true theory" is "its own evidence" and that "its test is, that it will explain all phenomena" (*Collected Works* 1:8). The eventual outcome is Emerson's theory-practice of creativity, which, in tangible particulars as well as in abstract formulation, abandons artifacts for creating and mastery for improvising. His philosophy of creativity is grounded in Romanticism, which he extended from Western Europe to the farthest reaches of the west he imagined the idea of America to embody. In politics, he prized democratic reform, in science and natural philosophy evolution and renewal, and in literature and philosophy subjectivity as a relational process. He found complementary grounds in the eastern texts he read such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and Sufi mystic poetry, discovering his affinity with Asian spirituality and a more profound appreciation of the sacredness of creation than he found in Christian monotheism. In the confluence of Romantic and eastern philosophies, Emerson recognized his own commitment to ongoing transformations as the mode of life for the organic, creative universe, for individuals, and for any true theory or philosophy. The universe unfolding into consanguine diversity was, for him, a natural analog to the individual in continual reformation. Both could be explained and initiated by their natural analog in the mind thinking with metaphorical leaps to the beat of experience.

Nature is a declaration of cultural independence, but in challenging himself and his readers to meet today's dawn with "our own works and laws and worship" Emerson not only cited the precedent of "foregoing generations" (*Collected Works* 1:7) forging their own, but also drew on European Romanticism dating from the 1790s. Romanticism restored philosophy from a centuries-long internment in what Emerson called intellectual "fineries and pedantries" (3:34) to the "blood-warm[th]" that he praised in Wordsworth and Goethe (*CW* 1:68). Insisting on dynamic thinking that braved, rather than eschewed, passion and particularity, that embraced,

rather than sought to subdue, ambiguity and imagination, Romanticism produced a philosophical and literary style so radically "flesh and blood" (Wordsworth 323) that Wordsworth found it necessary to explain and defend it in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Thus released, philosophy infused and warmed what Emerson disparaged as the "wintry light of the understanding" (*Collected Works* 1:44). It restored sympathy to science and, as Wordsworth noted, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" to poetry (321). The new philosophy freely crossed disciplinary and socio-political borders. To Emerson's mind, breaking through such borders was requisite to the creative acts that mattered most to him, such as rendering "the solid seeming block of matter … pervaded and dissolved by a thought" (*Collected Works* 1:34), legitimizing "the literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life," elevating "the lowest class in the state" (1:67), and writing poetry. Romanticism kindled Enlightenment political theory of natural rights and social contracts to a blazing dawn of political revolution, social leveling, universal rights, and literary use of the personal and fragmentary as the portal to the universal; that is, to the French and American revolutions, Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, Mary Wollestonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and the German Athenaeum philosophers' notion that "the relative incompletion" of the essay or poem is the condition of its absoluteness (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 40). Perhaps Emerson's most exuberant expression of these Romantic modes is his essay "Circles." There he celebrates the "thrill" of "conflagration" that ignites when "all that we reckoned settled shakes and rattles; and literatures, cities, climates, religions, leave their foundations and dance before our eyes" (*Collected Works* 2:183, 184).

However, philosophically, poetically, and politically, that thrill is only one aspect of the creative process for Emerson. In addition to breaking from "the old and trodden round," he also aspired "to draw a new circle," as nature itself showed "the way onward" to be (*Collected Works* 2:189, 190, 189). The intelligibility of "new" or "way," however, depends on threads of continuity, sutures of contiguity. One place Emerson found them was in the Eastern texts he read, mostly from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Persian Sufi mystic poetry. By temperament and training as a minister (a professional background that differentiates him from other Romantic writers) and because of the political crises of mid-nineteenth century America, Emerson was drawn to a different kind of transcendence than Coleridge or Shelley were. The thrill of transcendent eclipses was insufficient, at least for creating the kind of poetry and the kind of America Emerson envisioned. He needed transcendence that synthesized, that brought "each and all" into a dynamic composition of unity in variety (9:14). Eastern philosophical monism described the patient, creative process Emerson saw in conjunction with the dizzying progression of revolutionary circles. It coincided with his experience of nature and confirmed the epiphany he had in 1833 at the

Jardin des Plantes (Paris, the *Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle*) of nature's striking improvisational creativity.

In "Circles" he calls this process the "eternal generator" which "abides" as the "principle of fixture or stability" (*Collected Works* 2:188). While Coleridge pursued the eastern exotic in "Kubla Khan," Emerson explored eastern wisdom in "Brahma." Eastern monistic metaphysics resonated with his romantic view of nature as an organic, emergent whole. In contrast to the divine and complete unmoved mover posited by monotheism, eastern monism describes the divine and sacred as inherent and emergent, always becoming what it already is through the unfolding, improvisational expressions of the universe. In addition, Hinduism's yoking of philosophy to daily life mirrored the vital connective tissue Emerson felt must lie between poetic and political creativity, between the personal and the political. Emerson pursued the liaisons between science, poetry, ethics, and daily life to develop a philosophy of creative expansion that was equally pertinent to individuals and to a "new yet unapproachable America" (3:41), that aligned and entwined the epistemic, aesthetic, and ethical, and that was itself open-ended and reflective of nature's and his own onward tendency. The transcendent aspects of Emerson's philosophy are thus lateral and circular rather than hierarchical or ascendant. He insisted that creative expansions be generous and generative, arguing, for example, that the "highest effect" art should aim for is "to make new artists" (2:216). His philosophical practice, whether in the service of theory and inquiry or practical work, is improvisational, a matter of being "surprised out of our propriety" to do great things "without knowing how or why" (2:190). The attentiveness, generosity, and sustainability requisite to improvising align ethics to the aesthetics of Emerson's philosophy of creativity. They are also qualities that explain why his work anticipates many things he himself may not have fully realized, ranging from contemporary feminism and environmentalism to western permutations of eastern spirituality.

Emerson's understanding of creativity emerged from his experience of life as dynamic monism: "Life is a series of surprises" which are "the masterpieces of God, the total growths and universal movements of the soul" (*Collected Works* 2:189). His calculus is of ones becoming one becoming ones (as in "the creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn" [2:3]), and the centerpiece of his metaphysics is the "Unity in Variety,—which meets us everywhere" (1:27). Together these concepts explain and inform his observation that "each creature is only a modification of the other" (1:27). Creativity, then, hinges on reciprocal modifications. The seed text for his poem "Brahma" is the *Bhagavad Gita* passage in which Krishna teaches Arjuna the essential identity and interdependence of apparent opposites, even the slayer and the slain (9:365). Emerson describes monism succinctly in "Compensation": "Every thing in nature contains all the powers of nature. Every thing is made of one hidden stuff" (2:59). At the end of "Fate" he reveres "the Beautiful Necessity, which secures that all is made of one piece; that

plaintiff and defendant, friend and enemy, animal and planet, food and eater are of one kind" (6:26). Creative force resides in the transitions between friend and enemy (or any of the other pairs in Emerson's list) and is experimental, though it is often desired in the hope it will augment our control over the outcomes. Emerson invokes the formation of the embryo in "Experience" whose growth proceeds "not from one central point, but co-active from three or more points" as an indication that we must "bear with these distractions, with this coetaneous growth of the parts," for "they will one day be *members*" (3:41). "Life is hereby melted into an expectation" rather than an achievement or possession (3:41). The ethical consequence is that every thing matters whether or not we know how or why. As he puts the point in the poem "Each and All," "all are needed by each one" (9:14). The nearly religious consequence is that creativity is sacred. Emerson calls attention to "the sacredness which attaches to the act of creation," always insisting that it not be mistakenly attached to the created product itself (1:56) and always approaching it devotionally. For Emerson, the universe is a continuous variation of "one hidden stuff" toward new, as yet uncharted, possibilities, and he is smitten with its endless elaboration and integrity.

Coextensive values are the logical correlative of monistic metaphysics. For Emerson, the creativity of the universe is at once authentic, ethical, and aesthetic. As he puts the point in *Nature*, "truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same ALL" (*Collected Works* 1:17). A similar alignment of values emerges in Romantic philosophy as well to align truth with beauty and to see them both as inherently moral. For Emerson, because "the universe is represented in every one of its particles," every particle has aesthetic value and ethical rights and responsibilities. Each is requisite; "nothing is fair or good alone" (9:14); therefore difference is necessary for beauty, truth, and goodness to be. Creativity, or playing with possibility, is predicated on an affinity with difference that does not erase but sustains it. In "Experience," Emerson admits the distraction and confusion generated by difference, but is resolute that introducing "a new element," whether a son, a poem, or social justice, entails tolerating ambiguity and vulnerability (3:40) with patience and faith in the creative process.

Emerson's insight is that individuals are necessarily and essentially consanguineous in a complex, evolving web woven of the glistening strands of multiple subjectivities. Individuals are co-creators, and he characteristically composed his work to invite and inspire modification. For Emerson, individual identity emerges through relation or not at all, a point that has become a signature premise of feminist psychoanalytic theory. For example, Jessica Benjamin argues that from the first relation between mother and infant, individuation is not a matter of "how we become free of the other, but how we actively engage and make ourselves known in relationship to the other" (18). Self-knowledge (and thus authentic self-expression and ethically defensible self-expansion) accrues in relation to others. As Alan Watts observed in his western Buddhist way, "what you are in your innermost being escapes

your examination in much the same way that you cannot look directly into your eyes without using a mirror, you cannot bite your own teeth, and you cannot touch the tip of your left index finger with the tip of your left index finger" (1980, 1). "Looking for your own face?" asks the Sufi poet Attar: "lose yourself as lovers lose themselves," and you will find it (Khan 57). Between Attar and Watts there is Emerson provocatively declaring himself "the lover of nature," opening himself to an intimate unity with what lies "under the undermost garment of nature" (*Collected Works* 1:9, 27).

Creativity depends on attentive, unconditional exchanges with the other, in Emerson's words, on keeping "the mind … open to … [the] influence" of "all natural objects" (*Collected Works* 1:9). Creativity is necessarily cooperative and inclusive, not competitive and exclusive. Because creativity arises in relationship, it is open-ended and uncertain. At the physical level of procreation, the social level of political constitution, or the imaginative level of art, creativity requires susceptibility to the other. Feminism is also eloquent on this point. Adrienne Rich describes the "painful motions / of staying cognizant: some part of us always / out beyond ourselves" (45). In Hélène Cixous's view, "there is no invention possible, whether it be philosophical or poetic, without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety" (*Newly* 84). She notes that "dizzying, precipitous flights between knowledge and invention" go hand in hand with love that "dares for the other" ("Laugh" 263). For Emerson, the poet's "insight … does not come by [detached] study, but by the intellect *being* where and what it sees, by sharing the path, or circuit of things" (*Collected Works* 3:15, emphasis mine). We cannot share the paths of things by dictating the trail; we have to walk beside, not ahead of, things.

Given the uncertainty of naked engagement with the other, the path we walk is improvisational. Emerson's characterization of the path as a circuit suggests both its circularity and its circuitousness. Because creative "power ceases in the instant of repose" (*Collected Works* 2:40), arriving at the poet's insight slides into leaving it for another. Improvisation is a strategy for sustaining the creative process. Emerson names himself an "experimenter," an "endless seeker" (2:188), because being finished is anathema to creativity. Creative power "resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf" (2:40). Hence Emerson's distinctive commitment to incompletion and his frank admission that "I know better than to claim any completeness for my picture. I am a fragment, and this is a fragment of me" (3:47). Sustained creativity requires such incompleteness. A poem is an artifact of the poet's insight; the life of insight entails abandoning the artifacts for the path. Emerson finds epistemological certainty and inspiration in the experience of "incessant movement and progression," freely admitting "the law of eternal procession" that undoes his every thought and mood and action (2:188, 186). He does so with good reason. As Anne Klein points out in her feminist study of Buddhist philosophy, there is "freedom … in coming to understand that the mind need not be conceived as a container

that gets filled up, but can be experienced as an open possibility where something more may always take place" (74). Klein says that kind of space ensures that "there is always room for something else" (85).

Room is essential for creative improvisation. In his study of creativity, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, jazz violinist Stephen Nachmanovitch explores improvisation as "a master key to creativity" (6). Just as Emerson argues that the poet's insight comes "by the intellect being where and what it sees" (*Collected Works* 3:15), Nachmanovitch argues that improvisation requires "pass[ing] beyond competence to presence" (21). "Faithfulness to the moment … entails continuous surrender" (21), and it is necessary because "only unconditional surrender leads to real emptiness, and from that place of emptiness I can be prolific and free" (144). Like Emerson, who writes that poets are only "capable of a new energy … by abandonment to the nature of things" (*Collected Works* 3:15), Nachmanovitch finds reception and yielding crucial to creativity: he says, "for art to appear, we have to disappear" (51). To improvise well, we have to "give up being safely wrapped in our own story" (Nachmanovitch 21). Holding the mind, as Emerson says, "open to … influence" (*Collected Works* 1:9), open to the truth as spoken by others, is not a threat to originality but is as requisite to it as acting out of one's own genius. Originality, according to Emerson and Nachmanovitch, is not primarily a matter of novelty in the marketplace but of, as Emerson says, having "an original relation to the universe" (1:7). In "Plato," Emerson writes, "Every great artist has been such by synthesis. Our strength is transitional, alternating, or, shall I say, a thread of two strands. The sea-shore, sea seen from shore, shore seen from sea, the taste of two metals in contact, and our enlarged powers at the approach and at the departure of a friend; the experience of poetic creativeness, which is not found in staying at home nor yet in traveling, but in transitions from one to the other, which must therefore be adroitly managed to present as much transitional surface as possible" (4:31–32). Moving well "between one's own and others' voices, between public and private domains, between self and other" (Klein 113) is key to what Emerson calls the "true art of life" (*Collected* 3:35).

The same holds true for creativity at national or cultural levels. In Emerson's view, the sustainable and ethical creative expansion of a nation requires a firm commitment to incompleteness and an unmeasured receptivity to the other. In "Experience," he announces his readiness "to die out of nature, and be born again into this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West" (*Collected Works* 3:41). But his imagination heads east and figures this west as "the sunbright Mecca of the desert" (3:41), not as the pioneer's prairie, the miner's western mountains, or the territory that would lure Huckleberry Finn. Unlike settlers, miners, land speculators, too many governments, and many western philosophers, Emerson does "not make" or stake a claim; he "arrive[s] there, and behold[s] what was there already" (3:41). His expansion is more a pilgrimage than a conquest. All a

miner knows is by penetration into the earth; all Emerson knows "is reception" (3:48). "I am and I have," he writes, "but I do not get, and when I have fancied I had gotten anything, I found I did not" (3:48). The kind of creativity Emerson wants to see in building a nation arises in relations between sliding surfaces as exposed and receptive to each other as possible, not in transactions adroitly managed to minimize liability and maximize profit. For Emerson, as for one of his most improvisational readers, Stanley Cavell, creativity is the essential task of culture that America persists in shirking. It is not an incidental perk of culture to be enjoyed only when the "real" work of the day is done, the forests logged, the fields plowed, the airports and databases secured. Emerson would agree with feminist poet Audre Lorde who insists, "poetry is not a luxury" for women, but "a vital necessity of our existence" because "it forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action" (37). Emerson's description of poets as "liberating gods" (*Collected Works* 3:18) is not just a metaphorical flight. He calls for a lived poetry embodied in American cultural practices, not just a poetry of words reprinted in American literature anthologies. For Emerson, being a poet is coextensive with being a participant citizen. In Lorde's words, "this is poetry as illumination" that reveals the "places of possibility within ourselves" (36). From those places come the creative resources and vigor to respond to Emerson's calls for "broad justice where we are" (*Collected Works* 3:35).

Emerson's theory and practice of social and political creativity differs from conventional western thinking and behavior beyond the difference of Romanticism from medieval theism or Classical and Enlightenment rationalism. Out of Aristotelian preoccupation with the unmoved mover (divided by the eighteenth century into God the watchmaker and the laws of physics) and western monotheism's theistic narrative of creation, the storyline that emerges, and it is historically a gendered one, is "a man walks into the world, has his own ideas, and reforms the world in his own image." Whether he goes down in history as heroic or evil, the story hinges on unilateral power rather than attentive improvisation. The caveat of the story as told by western monotheism is that we are created creators, fated to fail in our aspirations to be divine. In "Nominalist and Realist," Emerson points out the "wild absurdities" in "our thinking and speech" that "this old Two-Face, creator-creature" distinction propagates (*Collected Works* 3:143–44). Rationalism's parallel caveat is that we are consequences in an essentially deterministic sequence, causes who are themselves effects with mechanistic precision. The unfortunate psychological fallout of either proviso is our anxiety about being derivative; we are literally stuck in our own model of creativity as hopelessly competitive with the best creation being singular, novel, superlative, but never first. We think ourselves arrived too late and, hence, consign ourselves to what Thoreau called "lives of quiet desperation" (10) in a futile push to get ahead. As a consequence, according

to Alan Watts, in the west, we live "in constant contention with everything" (*OM* [1980], 27). Watts says, "the symbol of all this in our culture is the bulldozer" (*OM* [1980]): a developer will "scrape off the top [of a hill] until it is perfectly flat and then scrape off terraces all the way down. It will upset the ecology of the hill, and then eventually all the houses will fall down, but by then the payments will have been made. Of course, a good architect would design a house to fit the hill. Why does the developer not hire such an architect? Essentially it is because the developer does not feel that the external world is his own body. It is" (1980, 28).

Emerson has a different take on creation. To begin with, for him the external world is the "*other me*" (*Collected Works* 1:59). Furthermore, he admits in "Experience" that he has "not found that much was gained by manipular attempts to realize the world of thought" (3:48). He also insists on the "infinitude of the private man" (*JMN* 7:342), elaborating the concept with two metaphors in "Nominalist and Realist," one soaring and celestial and the other as ground-bound as a writer can get: "as our earth, whilst it spins on its own axis, spins all the time around the sun through the celestial spaces, so the least of its rational children, the most dedicated to his private affair, works out … the universal problem. We fancy men are individuals; so are pumpkins; but every pumpkin in the field, goes through every point of pumpkin history" (*Collected Works* 3:144). These premises give rise to a different storyline: a man walking within the world, seeing that "each and all" are requisite to truth and beauty, "springing spontaneous … creative manners … creative actions, and creative words" (9:14; 1:57). No tenses or apocalypse, no calculated product or bottom-line, and no saints or sinners, just a person creating, looking, as Emerson says the Oversoul itself does, "steadily forwards, creating a world before her, leaving worlds behind her," rendering in her creation, as the poet does, "the flowing or metamorphosis" (2:163; 3:12).

Unfortunately, in the American marketplace, in Emerson's time and our own, the bulldozer often wins out over the "good" architect, and certainly over the liberating poet-god. Watts paraphrases a passage from Emerson's "Self-Reliance" to explain why: "These roses under my window do not worry about whether they are better than former roses or whether succeeding roses will be better than they. There is simply the rose; it exists with God today. But human beings, heedless of the riches which surround them, are always on tiptoe to foresee a future, and they do not know how to live completely here and now" (*OM* [1980], 120). Watts is suggesting that standing on tiptoe is a failure to see where we are because we are occupied in looking at where we are not. Teetering on tiptoe, speculative eye straining toward a future, can blind a person to what is actually the case and literally underfoot. In that blind spot, a crack forms where what Emerson called "the tyranny of trade" (*Collected Works* 5:95) can gain a foothold and propagate. As Watts says "most of us would rather have money than tangible wealth … we are so tied up in our minds that we have lost our senses" (*OM* [1995], 1). That is why the developer does not hire a "good"

architect, and why creativity dwindles to sterility, or worse yet, abets it. Emerson describes the impasse and its remedy. When we form our ideas into "circumstance[s],—as, for instance, an empire, rules of an art, a local usage, a religious rite," we tend "to solidify, and hem in the life" (*Collected Works* 2:181), steadily suffocating vital and creative thinking with our own intellectual inertia. The profit we generate thereby begins to solidify poverty. The function of creative imagination, whose "quality … is to flow, and not to freeze" (3:20), is to burst "over that boundary on all sides" and return one's life to "self-evolving" (2:181, 180). Emerson admires the rose because "its nature is satisfied, and it satisfies nature, in all moments alike" (2:39). His lessons about transformations, poetically or politically, are counter and corrective to the pervasive pressure to own, get, have, and keep in a heap surrounded by whatever fortifications one can command. He values creativity over possession, becoming over having.

All too often, the more impregnable our circles are, the more stifled our cultural and political creativity becomes. We come to think ignorantly that survival means permanence rather than succession, that power means the ability to take rather than to give, that knowledge lies in excising ideas from bodies rather than in recognizing their vital integration, and that creativity entails setting anchor rather than setting sail. Emerson expresses his frustration about this in "Experience": "we see young men who owe us a new world, so readily and lavishly they promise, but they never acquit the debt; they die young, … or if they live, they lose themselves in the crowd" (*Collected Works* 3:30–31). In "The Poet," Emerson calls America "a poem" (3:22) but looks "in vain" (21) for the "timely" poet (21) who can put "not metres, but a metre-making argument" (16) to "the value of our incomparable materials" and ameliorate "the barbarism and materialism of the times" (21). Cavell takes Emerson and Thoreau to be the most profound and useful American philosophers, the thinkers who do him "the most good" (83), and his frustration with America has more than a hundred years on Emerson's, years that have seen yet more brutal political re-mappings of national boundaries, the invention and use of nuclear weapons, pesticides that raised the threat of what Rachel Carson named "silent spring," and energy consumption that raises the level of the oceans. As for transforming Emerson's and Thoreau's insights into political and social reality, Cavell charges that our not having done so "drives you mad, as with the death of a child" (95). In Cavell's view, the promise of America "has deprived us of the reasons" not to "put the ideals of philosophy into practice" (95, 94).

In "The American Scholar," Emerson wants to "fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill" (*Collected Works* 1:52), better than bending the creative impulse to meter or metronome. That something is improvisational skill: the ability to notice, respond, and let go. "Whim," "spontaneity," "flames and generosities of the heart" (2:30, 37, 190)—these are the words Emerson uses in speaking of the practice and method of his philosophy of creativity. People improvise

best on their own instruments. Emerson took up the poem and the poetic essay, reminding his readers "that I am only an experimenter … an endless seeker" and instructing them to "not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not" (2:188). He laid out a philosophy of creativity as he conducted his life: not by fixing and separating, but by tending to the moving, to the linkage of metamorphosis. Stylistically his writing calls attention to "the metamorphosis" that "does not stop" (3:17). Emerson's whole point was to be of use toward creative transformations, and that requires relinquishing control to a radical extent. As Lawrence Buell writes, "more than any other major writer, Emerson invites you to kill him off if you don't find him useful" (292). He embraced his own contradictions as generative, famously noting that a "foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds" (*Collected Works* 2:33). As much as Emerson admired systematic thinkers and powerful character, he was fully aware of the tendency in any system of thought or pattern of conduct to settle, or be settled, such that it cannot possibly deliver on its promise. His call is to return, with patience and persistence, from thoughts to thinking, from studies to being, from artifacts to creating, and from the muddy bank to the clear flowing water.

The practical philosophical question Emerson is compelled to ask repeatedly is "where do we find ourselves," the answer is always "on 'sliding surfaces,'" and the requisite conduct is aesthetic and muscular: "the true art of life is to skate well" on those surfaces (*Collected Works* 3:27, 28, 35), improvising a path both fair and good as we go. Emerson's oeuvre is an improvisational philosophy manifest in his practice of creativity, the highest effect of which, in his view, should be to give rise to creators. It reveals certainty and completion as problem areas, bastions to be unsettled and abandoned in favor of open experimentation. To paraphrase Emerson's words in "Self-Reliance," only creating avails, not the having created. "The coming only is sacred," he writes in "Circles," and only in transition do we find ourselves; only in transformation are we ourselves, ripe with promise and possibility. All works of art, like all virtues and all governments, are "initial" (2:187, 215); to think or behave as if they were not is an abdication of creative license and responsibility. In the essay "Character," as Emerson revised it after the Civil War as the nation faced the daunting task of creating the "new yet unapproachable America" Emerson had metaphorically posed in "Experience" (3:41), he writes, "To a well principled man existence is victory" because "he feels the immensity of the chain whose last link he holds in his hand, and is led by it" (10:464). The metaphor speaks not only to the physical bonds that connect us to each and all, but also to the mixture of limit and import that we experience our creative endeavors to have. To be led onward by the last link is to find/found yourself creating the next link that someone else will find herself, or himself, holding—to do your work such that others can do theirs. There is such a generosity in that kind of working, that kind of thinking and writing. In Emerson's view, creativity leaves room for creativity. It is improvisational, with an ear to the past and

an ear for the future, listening for the right moment to hand it off. Emerson is very, very good at handing it off. This is "finding as founding" (to borrow the title of Stanley Cavell's momentous essay on "Experience" [77]), whether in the poetic realm or the political.

WORKS CITED

Benjamin, Jessica. *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and The Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon, 1988. Print.

Buell, Lawrence. *Emerson*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003. Print.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures After Emerson After Wittgenstein*. Albuquerque: Living Batch P, 1989. Print.

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *New French Feminisms*. Ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. New York: Schocken, 1981. 245–64. Print.

Cixous, Hélène, and Catherine Clément. *The Newly Born Woman*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co, 1996. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Alfred R. Ferguson, William H. Gilman, Robert E. Spiller, and Carl F. Strauch. 10 vols. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1971–2013. Print.

———. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Eds. William H. Gilman, Ralph H. Orth, et al. 16 vols. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1960-1982. Print.

Khan, Inayat, and Coleman Barks, trans. *The Hand of Poetry: Five Mystic Poets of Persia*. New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, 1993. Print.

Klein, Anne Carolyn. *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, & the Art of the Self*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1995. Print.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, and Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Trans. Phillip Barnard and Cheryl Lester. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988. Print.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984. Print.

Nachmanovitch, Stephen. *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*. New York: Penguin Putnam, 1990. Print.

Rich, Adrienne. *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far, Poems 1978–1981*. New York: Norton, 1981. Print.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and "Civil Disobedience."* New York: New American Library, 1960. Print.

Watts, Alan. *OM: Creative Meditations*. Milbrae, CA: Celestial Arts, 1980. Print.

———. *OM: Creative Meditations*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts, 1995. Print.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface to the Second Edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*." *English Romantic Writers*. Ed. David Perkins. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967. 320–31. Print.

14 The Perversity of Skepticism
Qualia and Criteria in Emerson and Poe

Paul Grimstad

"ABSOLVE YOU TO YOURSELF"

In the *Meditations*, Descartes puts forth his well-known thought experiment in hyperbolic doubt: what is the apparent difference between my actually sitting in this room writing this essay and my dreaming that I am sitting here? There is no difference. My taking myself to be in this room could be the result of a *malin génie* (Descartes' phrase [15]) interposing a theatre of inner states between me and the world; a situation that has since been imagined as a brain floating in a vat, electrically stimulated in such a way so as to create the effect of sitting in a room, or whatever other scenario you can imagine. Confronted with this predicament, one feels compelled to ask: what are the criteria by which I might *know* that I am actually in this or that state rather that dreaming? How are we to respond to this bizarre sort of skeptic?

Immanuel Kant had a fascinating answer to all this, but one that does not get rid of the problem. He replaced the ground of the Cartesian thought experiment from appearances that are indistinguishable from a dream to the conditions under which one is even able to so much as pick out an object as a candidate for empirical judgment. This conditioned and discursive apprehension Kant called *Erfahrung* (experience), and in doing so he made the Cartesian account of appearances seem as though it took too much for granted. Experience was not just what hits your eye (potentially confusable with a dream) but is rather only possible given certain conditions. Skepticism persists, however, in that the price paid for this shift is that the things as they are in themselves (to stick with Kant's terms) become inaccessible. For all the glory of transcendental idealism, it nevertheless requires that things in themselves drop out of the picture (Kant 153–85, 193–245).

Another response to Descartes's problem—one Stanley Cavell has called "as right [an] interpretation and inheritance of Descartes as any other philosophical descendant I know" ("Being Odd" 106)—imagines the role of conditions in answering the skeptic in a different way. At the opening of the essay "Self-Reliance," Ralph Waldo Emerson writes: "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself and you

shall have the suffrage of the world" (261). Lines like these—apodictic, epigrammatic, apparently straightforward but full of surprise and difficulty—are typical of the prose of the *Essays*. Beyond the almost classical balance of phrase like "absolve you to yourself"—it scans as solidly iambic—what does it mean? The verb "absolve"—to set free, to acquit—is imagined as an action performed *by* a self *on* itself. Why should a declaration of mental integrity be followed by this odd command? Just how is one to undertake an act of self-acquittal? And why, and of what, do we need acquitting? A few lines further on Emerson implies that what you need to acquit yourself of are what he calls "the dear old doctrines of the church"; and some lines before that it is what he simply names "conformism."[1] But why then is all this a matter of "suffrage"? Suffrage, it seems, because in freeing ourselves from the coercive tribunal of the opinions of others—which may take the form of something as historically freighted as church doctrine, or something as ephemeral as those who demand we reproduce versions of our past thoughts or actions so that they may be reassured of our commitments—in freeing ourselves from all this we earn a kind of entitlement: a right to be heard; to have our aversions taken up by "the world." What sounds like an intimately private relation—"absolve you to yourself"—turns dramatically into a promise of public recognition: "the suffrage of the world."

The problem or dilemma Emerson's prose gets into view here—how an intimately private act of "absolving you to yourself" leads to winning the world's "suffrage"—is close to what Stanley Cavell means when he says that in the essay "the private and the social will be achieved together" ("Being Odd" 114). Cavell notes this in relation to a different moment in "Self-Reliance"—he has in mind Emerson's line: "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius" (Emerson 259)—but it seems nevertheless an appropriate thing to say about the specific example I am focusing on. For Cavell there is an additional element at play: the privacy of self-address might not turn out the way the speaker imagines it. We might capsize into solipsism, turn out to be self-deceived, strutting with sham courage: in any case, indulging in some bit of inner artifice that never touches—let alone wins the "suffrage" of—the world. In this case we would merely be "haunting the world" as Cavell puts it ("Being Odd" 110). Let's stay in a Cavellian key and call this less successful act of self-acquittal the truth, or mood, of skepticism. Skepticism arises here as the worry that the "integrity of one's own mind" won't get out of what the later essay "Experience" calls a "prison of glass" (474). The hope that the private and the social will be achieved together may turn out to be merely that—a hope—and a vain one. Cavell says of this scenario that it is one way of imagining the "romantic problematic of self-consciousness" and "the romantic interpretation of the Fall as self-consciousness" ("Being Odd" 112).

In what follows, I aim both to elucidate Cavell's account of, as well as consider some alternative ways of understanding, the American romanticist

response to the threat of skepticism. If the relation of private idiosyncrasy to shared publicity made vivid in the style of essays such as "Self-Reliance" and "Experience," as well as in Poe's tale "The Imp of the Perverse" (all taken up in relation to Cartesian doubt in Cavell's essay "Being Odd, Getting Even"), that relation may be understood as bound up with confusions about how we talk about "self-consciousness"—call it conscious awareness—or what much more recent philosophy of mind calls *qualia*. We cannot get a full or accurate sense of the meaning of the American romanticist response to Cartesian skepticism without taking into consideration the tendency to think of experience as synonymous with qualia. One thinker who gets into view the misleading equation of experience and qualia is Ludwig Wittgenstein, and in wanting to find affinities between the prose style of American writers like Poe and Emerson and the later thought of Wittgenstein, I take my cue to some extent from Cavell. However, I also want to go further and focus on something not taken up in Cavell's writing on either late Wittgenstein or American romanticism: that Emerson, Poe, and Wittgenstein show, each in their different ways, how the grammar of the word "experience" includes *both* aspects of what we might call "qualia"—what things are like; first person immediacy—and the public criteria by which our words become shareable. The figures I engage with here each devise unique literary methods for throwing into relief the bad analogies that lead to what Wittgenstein calls the "bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language" (*Philosophical Investigations* Sec. 109); and they do this by showing how the grammar of the word "experience" includes *both* qualial and criterial aspects.

QUALIA AND CRITERIA

One voice says to another in a tone of plaintive insistence: "but there is a *something* all the same which accompanies my cry of pain! And it is on this account that I utter it. And this Something is what is important." A dash marks the arrival on the scene of another disputant, who proceeds to throw cold water on the former's insistence on this Something, saying: "Only to whom are we telling this? And on what occasion?" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* Sec. 296).

While I do not set out to attach pat philosophical labels to the voices of Wittgenstein's interlocutors, let me at least note that the last voice seems to invoke some version of the ordinary language philosopher's response to the theorist of reference: Stop essentializing! Look at what we say when! If the way to dissolve what seems to be a problem of reference is some version of the well-known "meaning is use" position attributed (often too reductively) to the later Wittgenstein, I take this to be an at least provisional Wittgensteinian diagnosis: when we insist on a Something to which our cry of pain refers, we confuse one set of rules for a language game—call it "observation" talk—with another set of rules—call it the expression of

sensation. To fall prey to this confusion is, as Peter Hacker puts it, to "project the features of one language game onto another" (15). Wittgenstein describes this sort of projection in his 1934 Cambridge lectures where he writes of being "led into puzzlement by an *analogy* which irresistibly, drags us on" (*Blue and Brown Books* 108). He spelled out more explicitly what he meant by these sorts of puzzlingly overextended analogies in his 1935 "Notes for a lecture on Private experience and Sense Data":

> There seems to be a description of my behavior, and also, in the same sense, a description of my pain! The one, so to speak, the description of an external, the other of an internal fact. This corresponds to the idea that in the sense in which I can give a part of my body a name, I can give a name to a private experience. … I am drawing your attention to *this*: that language-games are very much more different than you think … the proposition "I have a tooth-ache" is [far] from a description … [yet] [i]n "I have a toothache" the expression of pain is brought to the same form as a description "I have 5 shillings."
>
> (*Philosophical Occasions* 262)

To think "I have a toothache" is the same *kind* of proposition as "I have 5 shillings" is to be dragged on by a false analogy. More specifically, it is to mistake the grammar of descriptive observation for the grammar of the expression of sensation. I use the word "grammar" in the explicit sense found in Wittgenstein's later writing: not a calculus of abstract rules but something like the pattern of our linguistic practices; the unsurveyable motley of ways we use words on specific occasions, in specific contexts.

The ideas taken up in these lecture notes from the mid-1930s come to fuller expression in *Philosophical Investigations* where we get what sounds like a corrective to this sort of grammatical confusion; as when one of the voices in the *Philosophical Investigations* says simply at one point: "An inner process stands in need of outward criteria" (Sec. 580). Just how are we to understand the relation of an "inner process" to an "outward criteria"? Much recent philosophy of mind treats "inner process" as synonymous with words such as "qualia," "conscious awareness," and very often simply "experience." In his well-known 1974 essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" Thomas Nagel calls that which cannot be naturalistically reduced—what something is like—"conscious experience," as does Joseph Levine in his 1983 essay "Materialism and Qualia." Around the same time, Frank Jackson, in his widely cited "Mary" thought experiment, calls that which Mary doesn't know "qualitative experience"; and more recently David Chalmers, describing the problem of consciousness as a problem of "supervenience"—that is, given an exhaustive description of the physical facts, the facts about consciousness remain an extra unexplained something—calls that extra unexplained something "experience." All these different accounts treat the quality of what something is like—seeing red,

tasting strawberries, hearing a G minor 7th chord on the piano, feeling warm water on your leg, or a pang of regret, or fear, or twinge of anticipation, and of course feeling pain—as what we mean by *experience*. On all these accounts, when you use the word "experience" you do so as a word for designating what something is like for you, privately.

Is this what Wittgenstein—or the voice in section 580 of the *Philosophical Investigations*—means by "inner process"? And if it is this sort of "privacy" Wittgenstein is trying to show as bound up with a grammatical confusion, what does that have to do with the "conscious awareness-qualia-experience" synonymy we find in the major strain of philosophy of mind I've just sketched? Beginning with the question: "how do words refer to sensations?" (*Philosophical Investigations* Sec. 244). Wittgenstein addresses problems of just this sort in what has come to be called the "private language" argument (roughly Sec. 244–315). An example from that very rich and difficult stretch of the book that I want to single out here is in section 297:

> Of course, if water boils in a pot, steam comes out of the pot, and also a picture of steam comes out of a picture of the pot. But what if one insisted on saying that there must also be something boiling in the picture of the pot?

Assuming this example has something to do with the question in section 244—how do words refer to sensations?—we might initially be led to break down the coordinates of the thought experiment schematically: pot = body, steam = behavior, water = pain (this is how Hacker suggests we read it [211–13]). That schema would then tell us that the example shows how it is as misguided to treat pain as a *something* that accompanies an avowal of pain as it is to say that *something* must be boiling in the picture of a pot with pictured steam coming out of it. However, in the language-game with pain, Hacker writes, "no *picture* … of pain plays any role, just as no picture of bubbling water plays any role in the picture of boiling water in a (closed) pot. *But it is a picture of water boiling in a pot, for all that!"*(212). In other words, the picture doesn't "fail" as a picture of boiling water just because there is no actual water bubbling inside it; we know perfectly well what it depicts.

Consider how the pictured pot example comes up in the fourth section of Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*. Cavell at first seems to share the account found in Hacker—that section 297 of the *Philosophical Investigations* is meant to get into view the particular sort of confusion that arises when the grammar of observation is projected onto the grammar of the expression of sensation. However, Hacker doesn't touch the question of why Wittgenstein chooses to imagine this confusion in the form of what Cavell calls a "parable." If the parable of the boiling pot really were parabolic—that is, if it were, as the Hacker schema has it, keyed

as pot/body, steam/behavior, water/pain—it would still be unclear just *where* the pain is: Cavell wonders if altering the picture—say by having a glass pot, or showing the pot from a tipped angle so that you see over the rim of its top—would change things. But this doesn't get rid of the difficulty of where to *locate* pain: tipping over the rim of the pot won't help because "we would not know, in the case of pain, what the analogy *is* to looking 'over the rim of its top.'" In what sounds like a mood of restless dissatisfaction, Cavell realizes that in trying to

> imagine a glass man or woman (not merely a man with glass skin and muscles, but as it were, glass through and through) I find that I do not quite know where to *place* the pain: suppose I imagine that the glass man's shoulder hurts and I want to show where it hurts, say by painting the place red. Do I paint the pain on his shoulder, or in his brain, or along the nerves between, or in all at once? This last possibility gives pain so unsatisfactory a shape!
>
> (*Claim* 333)

All of this is for Cavell part of Wittgenstein's talent for imagining striking examples that show how avowals of pain do not "point" to anything. It is rather as if the avowal covered the qualia and the criteria in one go; as if your cry of pain reached out and meant "pain" in accord with a grammar that works perfectly well to get one's pain across, provided we are competent in a language game. The appeal to the parable form thus shows how in Wittgenstein, as Cavell puts it, a "philosophical task is not notably unlike a literary task"; how, as he puts it at an earlier moment in *The Claim of Reason,* "the *way* the *Philosophical Investigations* is written is internal to what it teaches" (3).

We might go further and say that such examples show how the grammar of "experience" talk is not a matter of connecting or aligning something inner (qualia) with something outer (criteria). If it is misleading to think that our use of the word "experience" involves us in a dilemma of needing to coordinate these two sides, then the parable of the pictured pot makes this confusion unavoidable. What we should not take from the parable is some verdict on which side the experience *really* is (this is a metaphysical "really"). The casting of the problem into the form of picture seduces us into thinking that something might get *between* qualia and criteria. But why not just say our everyday "experience" talk takes up qualia and criteria in one go; sensations are expressed only if we already know how to move some pieces in the game. To know how to use the word is to be familiar with the routes of meaning that come bundled with its grammar; to know that "experience" talk just *includes* an appeal to public criteria, and so allows expressions of sensation to become sharable and intelligible. At this point, we might say experience just *means*: an "inner process stands in need of outward criteria."

THE GRAMMAR OF EXPERIENCE

For Emerson the idea that "experience" talk includes both qualia and criteria is made vivid in prose that treats qualia—what things are like—as objects we are tempted to clutch at and hold on to. At many points in his essay "Experience," we are given object-like appearances that stand in for what is at the same time alluded to (often obliquely) as feeling. At the very outset of the essay, we are confronted with a problem of what things are like: indeed, this is just what the speaker is having trouble figuring out. "Where do we find ourselves?" a dazed voice asks, as if physical location in space and time had itself become a mystery. All we can make out is that we are in "a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none" (471). Soon we arrive at an event one thinks would elicit the most agonizing personal pain, only to discover that it is an occasion for an almost perfect absence of qualia. "In the death of my son," Emerson writes,

> I seem to have lost a beautiful estate,—no more. I cannot get it nearer to me … It does not touch me: some thing which I fancied was a part of me, which could not be torn away without tearing me, nor enlarged without enriching me, falls off from me, and leaves no scar. It was caducous. I grieve that grief can teach me nothing, nor carry me one step into real nature. (473)

The numbness that seems to have petrified the speaker of these lines nevertheless conjures odd objects in the prose: a son becomes an "estate" and then a vegetal growth that, as "part" of the speaker, would "tear" him were it to be removed and yet "falls off" without "leaving a scar." What ought to be piercingly, overwhelmingly qualitative—what it is like to lose a child—is here concretized in a "caducous" item, detached from the speaker.

When Emerson reflects more explicitly upon this absence of qualia, the tone becomes more of a lament: "I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition" (473). This well-known line has elicited what is I think by now a canonical gloss from Cavell ("Aversive Thinking" 38–39), who hears in it a disappointment arising from our efforts to "grasp" objects—that is, to get a hold of experience; to clutch it with our fingers. While Cavell here (and perhaps also Emerson) has in mind the German word *Begriff*—the gripping or grasping of the conceptual—I would add that the reason the speaker finds objects "evanescent" and "lubricious" is because we are in the habit of thinking that the way to get at them is to grab them. Again the effect of the prose is to render available to observation talk something presented initially as a problem of what things are like. The literary side of Emerson's philosophic task is thus in part to invent analogies for how precarious is the attempt to make feeling sharable, since our conceptual "clutching" may let slip what we are after,

leaving us always vulnerable to the mood of skepticism. Emerson calls this feature of our condition "unhandsome," a rather eccentric choice of word in this context, which seems to mean at once unattractive, meagre, and lamentable (and for Cavell an occasion for further thinking more about "hands," concepts, grasping and gripping).

That our "condition" is unhandsomely haunted by the threat (or mood or truth) of skepticism, both external world and other minds varieties, is rendered more conspicuously objectile in a later example: "Two human beings are like globes, which can touch only in a point, and, whilst they remain in contact, all other points of each of the spheres are inert" (Emerson 488). The line builds into a striking image the problem of experience thought of as split between qualia and criteria: as two sealed "globes" that only touch in spots. The problem of "touching"—of making available to others putatively private qualia—is here reduced to a geometry of isolated spheres. Earlier in the essay, the problem of making "inner processes" accessible to others flips extravagantly to its inverse when Emerson states: "the new molecular philosophy shows astronomical interspaces betwixt atom and atom, shows that the world is all outside; it has no inside" (481). The detour through materialism here is a red herring; elsewhere in the essay Emerson mocks the "impudent knowingness" of learned "physicians" (475), and after a last dig at the doctors—"there are no dupes like these" (482–83)—he states, in the apodictic mode we know from "Self-Reliance": "Life is a series of surprises, and would not be worth taking or keeping, if it were not" (483). Like "absolve you to yourself," "life is a series of surprises" seems straightforward enough on a first read. But read it again: A *series* of surprises? How surprising would the sixth or seventh surprise in the series be? In any case, something that ought to be a private qualitative relation—what we feel as a "surprise"—is turned into an item in a procession.

Surely Emerson does not, like Wittgenstein, set out to diagnose explicit lapses in the grammar of our words whereby we are dragged on by a false analogy. But he accomplishes something comparable at the level of style, by enacting in prose the relation of felt qualia to what can be shared in words. Like Wittgenstein he is attuned to the sorts of problems that come to arrest or bedevil that relation: sometimes the tone takes the form of an address to a "you"—some kind of listening public—that is really an injunction to do something to yourself: "Absolve you to yourself" is the example I noted above. Sometimes there seems to be a threat of vanishing entirely into what "Experience" names "scene-painting and counterfeit" (472). Of course we might read Wittgenstein's diagnoses of what we think we're talking about when we speak of "private" objects as a rejection of the mythologizing of the interior we hear in lines like "nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind." In this sense, Wittgenstein would be seen as a cool-headed corrective to the unhinged self-enclosure—unhinged from the routes of interest of our shared grammar—of the speaker of such lines. However, Emerson's insights into the relation of "Experience" to a certain grammatical

problem of private states and Wittgenstein's diagnosis of certain confusions that befall us when we allow false analogies to guide our thinking are of a piece insofar as both thinkers require literary methods of putting such problems before us. Both of them try to make us *feel* the lure of the problem.

THE SOUND OF POE'S PROSE

"Philosophy is not exhausted in argumentation," Cavell writes in "Being Odd, Getting Even" (109), and I take it that claim is linked to another in the same essay when he notes his enchantment with the "sound of Poe's prose" and its "incessant and perverse brilliance," which he says can be heard as a "parody of philosophy" (121). If it is the "sound" of prose that is at issue here then we ought to say it is the *quale* of a certain style, of reading or hearing just these words in this order. What it is like to read Poe's prose? What composite qualia arise from its Latinate circumlocutions, its alarming turns of thought, its making volatile adjacencies out of sobriety and delirium, its ventriloquizing the sound of rational argument and reasoning? One account we might give of Poe's prose style–qualia is how in so much of his best writing he turns the *sound* of argument—sequential, noncontradictory thought in which one proposition follows with validity from another—into a strange sort of analytical music: the fantasias of ratiocination in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter"; the anguished Q&A between the scholarly narrator and the blackbird in "The Raven"; the faux treatises and scientific hoaxes in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" and "The Imp of the Perverse." Such tales would seem of particular importance for exploring the connection between the idea that philosophy does not exhaust itself in argumentation and the claim that in Poe's prose can be heard a "parody of philosophy."

In the last mentioned above, "The Imp of the Perverse," Cavell finds a number of explicit parodies of philosophy, most obviously the "imp" of the title heard as a knowing inversion of Kant's categorical imperative. Poe's narrator purports to theorize a "faculty" of "perverseness" that leads us to act "for the reason that we should not" (Poe 827). This is quite literally a feature of the sound—or quale—of Poe's prose: "imp" heard as an echo of "imperative." To point that out is itself an impish move (and to build an argument around it is perverse—though it may well have been a knowing wink on Poe's part, since he knew German Idealism fairly well[2]), and it is in features like these that Poe, as Cavell puts it, "discovers a sound and a condition of intelligence, in which neither the reader nor the writer knows whether he or she is philosophizing" ("Being Odd" 121). However, there is another sense in which Poe's idea of the perverse manifests itself as a parody of philosophy, one Cavell does not explicitly mention: skepticism *is itself* a kind of perversion. It is perverse to take the world of external reality as possibly not really there; or some kind of complex fantasy. Put differently, skepticism is

that mood in which obvious everyday apprehension becomes an object for parody; occasions for perverse thought experiments. What if I am a brain in a vat? You say you see the apple: who's to say it isn't just a placard cunningly contrived to look like an apple, from this distance and in this light, when in fact behind it there is clockwork, or a tiny wooden stand? And how do I know *you* are not clockwork on the inside? And how can I be sure all of is not a dream? If entertaining skeptical problems of this sort amounts to a kind of perversity then in the case of "The Imp of the Perverse" this is also a formal matter. Since Poe's tale "pivots from essay to tale, it insinuates that we are … claiming that without the philosophic preface—which means without the hinging of essay and tale, philosophy and fiction—the reader might, as Poe puts it, 'with the rabble, have fancied me mad'" ("Being Odd" 126). Since that "philosophic preface" gives an account of the "faculty of perverseness," the idea of the perverse serves as the rational counterbalance to the "madness" of thinking the external world a mere hallucination.

What exactly does it mean to say that a parodic imitation of argument (a certain sound in prose) might become a "condition of intelligence"? And how then might an appeal to such conditions serve as a response to the problem of skepticism? I want to say in what remains that such conditions arise only insofar as they treat qualia as bound up unavoidably with criteria: in this case, the way the tale dramatizes the narrator's private speech becoming fatefully, decisively public. The relation of the privately felt to the publically acknowledged is made weirdly vivid in tale's *denouement,* where the narrator announces:

> They say I spoke with a distinct enunciation, but with marked emphasis, and passionate hurry, as if in dread of interruptions before concluding the brief, but pregnant sentences that consigned me to the hangman and to hell.
>
> (Poe 831)

What is immediately odd about this account is the way the narrator must take his own "distinct enunciation" on faith. It is "they"—those others around him in the street happening to hear him blurt out his confession—who have reported back to him his words. The criteria by which these words are shared are thus something the narrator must appeal to, invoke, draw upon, in order to verify his own use of the words. This is all the more conspicuous given that in the paragraphs leading up to the announcement in which he "relate[s] all that was necessary for the fullest judicial conviction" (832) he has been savoring the total concealment of his criminal deed (killing a man with fumes from a poison candle) repeating to himself, "in a low undertone, the phrase, 'I am safe.'" (831). The jarring generic shift from an opening treatise theorizing a faculty of perversity to a *denouement* in which a last instantiating example of that faculty is the confession of a criminal deed even though you are in the clear, is the tale's "perverse" co-articulation

of qualia and criteria. Neither as private "absolvement" leading to winning the "suffrage of the world" (Emerson, "Self-Reliance" 261), nor as the rendering theatrically objectile states that ought to be felt qualities (Emerson, "Experience" 472–73), but as the public confession of a qualitatively felt impulse, such that both impulse and confession are taken as examples of a faculty the narrator names "perverseness."

I have treated writers very different in tone and temperament—Emerson and Poe—as representatives of an American romanticist response to skepticism, with the intent of taking Cavell seriously when he says that Emerson's response is "as right [an] interpretation and inheritance of Descartes as any other philosophical descendant I know" ("Being Odd" 106); and that the "incessant and perverse brilliance" ("Being Odd" 121) of Poe's prose amounts to a parody of philosophy. I have, however, tried to go further in two ways: first, I have said that in succumbing to the mood of skepticism, we fall prey to the delusion that something might get between qualia and criteria (a problem the later Wittgenstein helps us to see as an illusion stemming from bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language); and, second, in focusing on specific moments in Emerson's and Poe's prose where they enact at the level of style a response to skepticism understood as premised on this presumed separation of qualia and criteria, that it is (to use Poe's term) "perverse" to indulge in the worry that we may be entangled in skeptical problems of either external world or other minds varieties.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed account of how these two threats to self-reliance—institutional doctrine and conformism—are linked in Emerson's addresses and essays of the late 1830s, see Kateb, Sacks, and Grimstad 17–41.
2. In a note on the epigraph from Novalis's *Moralische Ansichten* Poe used for his 1843 tale "The Mystery of Marie Roget," Thomas Mabbott (774) suggests that Poe has "improved" Sarah Austin's translation of this excerpt, included in her *Fragments from German Prose Writers*, a volume Poe reviewed in the December 1841 issue of *Graham's Magazine* (and one that includes extensive excerpts from Kant). For a more sustained consideration of Poe's knowledge of the German language and of German literature, see Gruener.

WORKS CITED

Austin, Sarah, trans. *Fragments from German Prose Writers with Biographical Sketches of the Authors*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1841. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. "Aversive Thinking: Emersonian Representations in Heidegger and Nietzsche." *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome, the Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. 33–63. Print.

———. "Being Odd Getting Even (Descartes, Emerson, Poe)." *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988. 105–30. Print.

———. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy*. New York: Oxford UP, 1979. Print.

Chalmers, David. "Consciousness and its Place in Nature." *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. Ed. David Chalmers. New York: Oxford UP, 2002. 247–72. Print.

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. 1640. Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays and Lectures*. Ed. Joel Porte. New York: The Library of America, 1983. Print.

Grimstad, Paul. *Experience and Experimental Writing: Literary Pragmatism from Emerson to the Jameses*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. Print.

Gruener, Gustav. "Poe's Knowledge of German." *Modern Philology* 2. 1 (1904): 125–40. Print.

Hacker, Peter. *Wittgenstein: Meaning and the Mind. Volume 3 of an Analytical Commentary on the* Philosophical Investigations. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. Print.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. 1787. Eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.

Kateb, George. *Emerson and Self-Reliance*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994. Print.

Jackson, Frank. "Epiphenomenal Qualia." *Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 127–36. Print.

Levine, Joseph. "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1983): 354–61. Print.

Mabbott, Thomas Olive. *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe: Tales and Sketches 1843–1849*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978. Print.

Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be A Bat?" *Philosophical Review* 83.4 (October 1974): 435–50. Print.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Poetry and Tales*. Ed. Patrick F. Quinn. New York: Library of America, 1984. Print.

Sacks, Kenneth. *Understanding Emerson: "The American Scholar" and his Struggle for Self- Reliance*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. Print.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations."* New York: Harper and Row, 1958. Print.

———. *Philosophical Investigations*. 1953. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958. Print.

———. *Philosophical Occasions, 1912–1951*. Eds. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993. Print.

Coda

Cavell and Wordsworth: Illuminating Romanticism

Edward T. Duffy

Stanley Cavell's *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* defines "serious romanticism's self-appointed mission" as a "contesting of philosophy, poetry, religion and politics," where the stakes are both as high and as intimate as possible since they "appear sometimes as the loss or gain of our common human nature, sometimes as the loss or gain of nature itself," not to mention the further awkwardness that this self-appointed mission is fraught with the "disreputable sense that the fate of this contest is bound up with one's own writing" (*In Quest* 43).

Given the ambition of this project, "it is understandable," Cavell remarks, "that [romantic] poetry takes itself, its own possibility, as its subject" (*In Quest* 66). As sweeping and as narcissistic as this may sound, it is nothing more than a truism about a body of poetry that is almost universally acknowledged to be as self-reflexive as it is philosophically ambitious. However, if there is no question but that English romantic poetry takes its own world-wording possibility as its own most pressing subject, what does remain questionable in this region of romantic self-reflexiveness is the animism, around which Cavell organizes the one chapter of *In Quest of the Ordinary* directly concerned with English romantic poetry and made up largely of readings of Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" and Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode."

I sense that for Cavell romantic animism has ceased to be a flashpoint for controversy and instead become a barely noted embarrassment, to be quickly glided past. For him and his philosophy, however, the stumbling block of romantic animism could not be so easily shunted aside. As he would subsequently acknowledge, the writing of his *The Claim of Reason* was calling for romanticism because it was a writing whose persistent quoting of romantic texts showed that it too was drawn toward this "questionable idea that keeps surfacing in romantic texts, that there is a life and death of the world dependent on what we make of it" (*In Quest* 68).

To get clear Cavell's conflicted turn toward a romanticism too closely bound up with the "superstitious and discredited mysteries of animism" (*In Quest* 45), it is necessary to recall how he heard his own dissatisfaction with the Kantian settlement of skepticism forcefully echoed in Coleridge's contention that the aftermath of Kant's domineering response to the scandal

of skepticism had left us with a world of objects not only "dead [and] fixed" (*In Quest* 44), but killed by our own hand's wielding of the categories of understanding to the exclusion of the "thing in itself." From here and with an admitted bending of chronology, Cavell came to see Coleridge's later Kantian preoccupations already at work in the earlier "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner," understood as "an enactment … of skepticism's casual step to the path of intellectual numbness" (Cavell, *This New* 57).

For Cavell, the deep Antarctic chill of the "Ancient Mariner" exposes the way we "live our skepticism" in a quite ordinary and even casual manner, which Wordsworth diagnosed as a world-historical "torpor" ("Preface" 599) where, in Cavell's words, "nothing (now) makes an impression on us" (*This New* 92). And if the "Ancient Mariner" is mostly a romantic "record of losses" (*Senses of Walden* 51), Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" is to him largely a romantic "text of recovery" (*In Quest* 50–77). Called a "natality ode" by Cavell (*In Quest* 73), it initially finds itself in a world almost as dead as that of Coleridge's mariner, but from there it goes on to a call for us "to take an interest in our lives" and turn toward what, amid all the glacial debris of our condition, yet remains charged with attraction for us, its call on us the sign and promise of our "heaven-born freedom." At the end of his reading of the romantic animism of Coleridge and Wordsworth, a newly appreciative Cavell finds in Wordsworth (and also in Coleridge) the signs of a "new and truer animism" that would replace the all too ordinary "world of death" we have created for ourselves "with lively origination, or say, birth; with interest" (*In Quest* 75).

To explore how a romantic animism thus reconceived as animating interest is, as it were, present at the creation of Wordsworth's self and of Wordsworth's world, I turn now, in necessarily extended quotation, to the first strictly autobiographical segment of *The Prelude*, the boat-stealing episode of the first book:[1]

> One evening–surely I was led by her ["Nature"]–
> I went alone into a shepherd's boat,
> A skiff that to a willow-tree was tied
> Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
> .....
> No sooner had I sight of this small skiff,
> Discovered thus by unexpected chance,
> Than I unloosed her tether and embarked.
> The moon was up, the lake was shining clear
> Among the hoary mountains; from the shore
> I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again
> In cadence, and my little boat moved on
> Even like a man who moves with stately step
> Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth
> And troubled pleasure. Nor without the voice
> Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on,

> Leaving behind her still on either side
> Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
> Until they melted all into one track
> Of sparkling light. A rocky steep uprose
> Above the cavern of the willow-tree,
> And now, as suited one who proudly rowed
> With his best skill, I fixed a steady view
> Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
> The bound of the horizon–for behind
> Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
> She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
> I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
> And as I rose upon the stroke my boat
> Went heaving through the water like a swan–
> When from behind that craggy steep, till then
> The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
> As if with voluntary power instinct,
> Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,
> And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
> Rose up between me and the stars, and still
> With measured motion, like a living thing
> Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned
> And through the silent water stole my way
> Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.
> There, in her mooring-place, I left my bark
> And through the meadows homeward went with grave
> And serious thoughts (I: 372–75, 380–417)

With "an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure" and not "without the voice / Of mountain echoes," the boy of this enduring memory transgresses the lines of *meum et tuum* with a shepherd's boat. But then when his gleeful mastery of his "elfin pinnace" takes him out beyond the boat's sheltering cave, he is forced into a 180-degree turn by the overbearing presence of a "huge cliff" which, because of the mountainous setting and the backward-rowing oarsman's enlarging perspective from cave to open water, seems to "rise up" against him, "stride" after him and thunder at him: "No. Thou shalt not steal." As abruptly powerful an effect as this has on the boy, the poet Wordsworth provides a glide-path up to its startling animism not only by its opening reference to the "voice of mountain echoes" but also by earlier and briefer intimations of his former self as, in one season, a poacher of woodcock snares and, in another, a pillager of eggs from ravens' nests.[2] On the former autumnal occasion "when the deed was done," the boy "heard among the solitary hills / Low breathings coming after" him (I: 329–30). And about the latter springtime offense, he remembers "[w]ith what strange utterance did the loud dry wind / Blow through my ears" (I: 348–49).

To young Wordsworth, the world speaks directly and pointedly, and never more consequentially than when, with an obvious sound and sense of climax, the massive minerality of this cliff has the last authoritative word when "as if with voluntary power instinct" it "rose up between me and the stars, and still / With measured motion, like a living thing / Strode after me."

Accurately to gauge what Wordsworth is saying here about the "seed-time" of his soul (I: 305), one has first to acknowledge that it is altogether natural that this member of "[a] race of real children … / … wanton, fresh" (V: 436–37) should on occasion kick over the traces and go in for some mildly transgressive behavior. This, I submit, is all that is meant by the first words of the episode claiming that the doer of the deed was "surely … led by her [i.e. the "Nature" of the preceding verse-paragraph]." It's a warm summer night, he's a red-blooded North of England lad and the boat's there for the taking. On his spirited own, he will test his skill and daring with it. And altogether natural that the boy's testing of limits will provoke the pushback of a cliff face seemingly endowed with watching eyes and a prosecutorial mien. Along with this, however, I trust, reasonable recuperation of this childhood scene of projecting one's guilt onto outward things, one has also to acknowledge that a persistent treasuring of this sense of a world all alive to one and one to it and its "ministry of fear" might seem if not outright mad, then at the very least a childish thought for an imagined infancy of the world. And yet it seems that as neither boy nor man can Wordsworth do any other than report the *fact* that to the impressionability (a huge word in Cavell) of his youthful mind the great mass of the striding mountain *appeared* to be coming after him, and his adult judgment that, for all its obvious confusion of the inanimate and the animate, this experience was the vouchsafing to him of a very personal care and ministry.

As said, the flagrant animism of this and other scenes from Wordsworth's *Prelude: Growth of a Poet's Mind* seems no longer as controversial as Cavell thinks it should be. This blunting of the animistic effect in Wordsworth stems largely from what Cavell acknowledges as its brilliant psychological recuperation by critics like Geoffrey Hartman (31–69) and Harold Bloom (147). The gist of this still powerful critical tradition is that in Wordsworth there is a never finally resolved interchange between Nature and human consciousness, and that although Wordsworth himself explicitly calls his work a "spousal verse" in praise of the continuous rendering and receiving of these two of mind and external world, some of his most powerful poetry—most signally for Hartman his account (in *Prelude* VI) of being surprised and overtaken by his own god-like power of imagination—show a poet for whom the mind, when most worthy of itself, gathers itself broodingly around such memorably charged "spots of time" as the boat stealing episode, the gift of whose "efficacious spirit" (IX: 268) is that in them "[w]e have had deepest feeling that the mind / Is lord and master, and that outward sense / Is but the obedient servant of her will" (XI: 270–72).

As this rough summary indicates, the preferred terms of criticism in this critical tradition are "consciousness" and "nature." Bloom, for example, asserts that "the central spiritual problem of Romanticism is the difficult relation between nature and consciousness" (qtd. in Cavell, *In Quest* 45). However, Cavell confesses that he is almost as uneasy with this line of romanticist criticism as he is indebted to it. For him, "consciousness" has too much unmanageable post-Kantian baggage, not to mention that "nature," with its drift toward the material likes of rocks and stones and trees and away from the desires and drives natural to any form of life, might not be the best of globalizing terms for "all the whirl of organism that Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life'" (Cavell, *Must We Mean* 52), especially when Cavell finds congenially ready to hand in both the Wittgenstein of his constant study and the Heidegger of his frequent citing the alternative global concept of *World*. And so Cavell reframes this joining with each other of the human and where that human finds itself as not the face-off of consciousness and nature, but the turning to and away from one another of knowledge and world where knowledge is understood as the "human capacity for applying the concepts of a language to the things of a world" (Cavell, *Claim* 17).

It was Cavell's dissatisfaction with this once dominating and still vital line of romanticist criticism that provided the immediate occasion for the following clarification of his philosophical outlook:

> As Wittgenstein more or less puts [it]: the issue is not to explain how grammar and criteria allow us to relate language to the world but to determine what language relates the world to be. This is not well expressed as the priority of mind over reality or of self over world (as among others, [Harold] Bloom expresses it). It is better put as the priority of grammar—the thing Kant calls conditions of possibility (of experience and of objects), the thing Wittgenstein calls possibilities of phenomena—*over both what we call mind and what we call the world*.
>
> (Cavell, *Contesting* 97, emphasis added)

This very economically saves the intuition of a "might of souls" that is searching for expression in both Wordsworth's own "mind as lord and master" and in Bloom's "priority … of self over world." However, while retaining this sense of the mind's power as extending all the way to "a life and death of the world dependent on what we make of it," it still leaves space—the same coextensive space—for a complementary Wordsworthian intuition about the pressing weight and life of things. His eye fixed firmly on the priority of Wittgensteinian "grammar" to both mind and world, Cavell can accept (as far as it goes) the now common picture of language as "[coming] to be hooked onto or emitted into the world" (*Pitch* 116), but he characteristically puts in a more emphatic word for "a reverse direction, in which the world calls for words, an intuition that words are … world-bound, that the world to be experienced, is to be answered, that this

is what words are for" (*Pitch* 116). It is, in short, in response to the world in which we find ourselves that we come "to individuate things and name, settle on nameables … determine what *counts* as instances of our concepts, this thing as a table, that as a chair, this other as a human, that other as a god" (*In Quest* 86).

To return now to the boy in the boat-stealing episode, he does not name the cliff a sternly just god or a super-ego or his conscience, but that is the kind of huge and mighty presence, to be named later, that the cliff assumes in his imagination and precisely why its apparently impending mass persists in Wordsworth's adult memory as an unforgettable spot of time speaking to him of something greater than himself and having authority over him. Inhabiting a region before the fully developed use and reach of moral discourse, the boy does not yet deal in such namings and conceptualizations, but by the agency of just such images as this cliff striding after him he is being readied for them. The distinction is essential for an appreciation of what is, as Wittgenstein might say, *off* about any reading of this spot of time that would take it as just the case of an impressionable boy projecting the "inner" reality of his guilt onto the "outward" thing of the cliff. This reading is undeniable as far as it goes, but in its trading on how, as Cavell puts it, we allow "false views of the inner and of the outer [to] produce and sustain one another" (Cavell, *Claim* 329), it does not go far enough because it too quickly skims over what he calls the "secular mysteries" attendant on "the depth to which an ordinary life requires expression, and the surface of ordinary means through which that life must, if it will, express itself" (Cavell, *World Viewed* 180),[3] express itself in (or more precisely here, on the way to) concepts that do not tell us or remind of "something antecedently known" but rather are in the business of "instituting knowledge, reconceiving, reconstituting knowledge, along with the world" (Cavell, *In Quest* 86). At this liminal stage in the boy's development, he has undoubtedly been the beneficiary of some moral instruction and example, but the only moral "innerness" he has to his own credit at this point is a vague unease, which itself latches on to the "low breathings" of the winds "coming after [him]" as its local but volatile habitation.

The taking and returning of the boat is a thoroughly contingent event. It might not have happened at all, or it might have run its course in a thoroughly forgettable manner. But it did happen to Wordsworth, and it stayed with him in memory as happening just so in perceived fact and just so in looming significance because the event brought on a self-recognition, in which he was (to put it mildly) interested, and by which he was authoritatively singled out for a rebuke that obliged him to turn himself around. In the ominously moving incumbency of the cliff, there was provided to the young Wordsworth a starkly vivid and salient image for what was then only beginning to make all the difference in and to him. The way the cliff entered into him for good was his first step onward to a less "dim and undetermined sense" (I: 419) of what could no longer hold its fire as the previously

"unknown modes of being" (I: 420) of this emerging "moral agent, judging between good / And evil not as for the mind's delight / But for her safety, as one who was to *act*" (VIII: 668–70, Wordsworth's emphasis).

From his first steps or strokes out toward an unknown and distinctively human mode of being just beginning to take hold and grow in him, the boy of the *Prelude*'s boat-stealing episode finds that anything of any moment or interest happening to him seeks projection or "placement" in outward things. The volatile reality stirring in this boy as a result of the cliff's interdicting of his glad animal spirits finds a lasting residual statement in just that image of the cliff and all the circumstances of perspective and horizon that made it appear to move just when and as it did. In that boy on that boat, something was quickening toward expression, but at this stage of the boy's development the expression is not yet ready to settle into words like *limitation* or *finitude* or *transgression*. Rather it seals itself hieroglyphically in the remembered picture of this event, an event pushed toward crisis by the boy's own transgressive hand and climaxing in the come-back of the cliff, striding after him "as if with voluntary power instinct."

The boat stealing passage is fraught with lines and the crossing of lines, with bearings and course changes, with points of reference and guiding stars and moorings. It first posits a "rocky steep" or "craggy ridge" as the "horizon" for the events it is to recount, and then represents the young protagonist as exuberantly proud of the skill that lets him put the ridge's most salient crag to good nautical use as (in the clarifying 1850 version) a "fixed" point of reference to keep his course toward a "chosen point" as efficiently straight and "unswerving" as possible (*1850*, I: 368–9). But then this *ad hoc* lode-star of the scene's initial horizon becomes a very diminished and indeed invisible thing when from "behind [its] craggy steep, till then / The bound of the horizon," the second cliff "towers" up into view and comes "between [the boy] and the stars." The boy first acted as if his *circum-stances* (whatever to the farthest horizon rung him round or stood over against him) were "nothing but the stars and the grey sky," but he soon learns otherwise, as his own actions provoke the entrance of a new actor onto this scene, one making its apparently unappealable claim to these skies. Moreover, to make this threatening cliff disappear the boy must turn his back on it. In order to silence its authoritative voice of interdiction, the one human actor in this scene must enlist his skill as an oarsman in the service of his new role as a prodigal son returning to the house of his father. He must complete a course of instruction that runs from an opening delusion of mastery where the sky's the limit and all is permitted to what, in a related context, Wordsworth calls the "correct[ion] [of] my desires" (*Prelude* XI: 374).

As traumatizing as Wordsworth's nocturnal encounter with the cliff was, he would ever after acknowledge it as a "ministry" because what he found there was some thing (some *thing*) he "would," as Kent says to Lear, "fain call master" (I. iv. 29). There and then he counted the cliff as a commanding authority because its suddenly threatening appearance spoke directly to his

condition and his agency on that specific occasion. The animated play of *that* cliff was the thing that caught the conscience of *that* impressionable boy. Eventually this speaking earth will call on any member of the talking form of life to respond in our self-defining coin of words. But before that, the world converses with us in (to quote Thoreau) "the language which all things and events speak without metaphor, which alone is copious and standard" (411).

This is an openly animist intuition about the human ascent to self-expression (and so self-authoring), for which Cavell finds philosophical ratification in the "possible philosophy of romanticism" he detects in the later Heidegger of the aptly entitled "The Thing" (Cavell, *In Quest* 66). Placing this essay in the post-Kantian tradition of Continental philosophy, Cavell sees it turning Kant's Copernican Revolution not so much upside down as inside out. For if Kant taught "that in order for there to be a world of objects of knowledge for us, a thing must satisfy the conditions … of human knowledge," Heidegger counters that "in order for us to recognize ourselves as mortal we [who are (Heidegger writes) "in the strict sense of the German word *bedingt* … the be-thinged, the conditioned ones"] … must satisfy the conditions of there being things of the world" (Cavell, *In Quest* 66). Heidegger, according to Cavell, is here calling for a thinking in the business of "letting things encounter us," and that, to Cavell's ear, is an uncanny echo of Emerson's discovery (in "Experience") that precisely because he "can't *get* it [the world] nearer me" (emphasis added), "he must accept the world's nearing itself to him." He must, writes Cavell, open himself out to the "acceptance of a certain revised form of life (philosophy may poorly call it animism) outside himself, outside any human power" (Cavell, *Day After* 266).

I could end here but in specific reference both to the play of illumination between philosophy and poetry and to the inescapable reality that things may be well or poorly called, I want further to suggest that the wrestlings of this contemporary philosopher with what he initially called the "superstitious and discredited mysteries of [romantic] animism" initiated him more deeply into the "secular mysteries" of the many forms of human expression haunted by "the depth to which an ordinary life requires expression, and the surface of ordinary means through which that life must, if it will, express itself" (Cavell, *World Viewed* 180). And I want still further to suggest that romanticism acted on Cavell as (in his own phrase) an "obscure prompting" toward his venturing on toward what might well be called the animism unbound of *A Pitch of Philosophy* and *Philosophical Passages*. For in these two later works, the signifiers of *wind, air*, and *breath* are everywhere, and in particular they are of the essence for Cavell's master-theme of "the condition of human freedom," as this is belatedly found by him to be most tellingly figured in Emerson's remark (in "Fate" [954]) that "We should be crushed by the atmosphere but for the reaction of the air within the body. … If there be omnipotence in the stroke, there is omnipotence in

the recoil"—the aversively thoughtful recoil (Cavell glosses) of "our breath made words" (Cavell, *Passages* 25).

To balance the extravagance of this claim to an "omnipotence in the recoil" of words, Cavell will very sensibly caution, "I do not make the world" and the things into which it endlessly gathers and differentiates itself, and neither do I "systematize the language in which the thing differs from all other things of the world. I testify to both, acknowledge my need of both" (Cavell, *Day After* 244). In the light of this dyadic pulse of a called for taking in and sounding out, one can say that Cavell's struggles with the unapologetically active universe of the English romantic poets also turned him back, with a difference, to what from almost the beginnings of his philosophical progress he honored in Thoreau as both a writer and a philosopher: namely, his determination to "try to hear what was in the wind, to hear and carry it express!" (Thoreau 336) Responding to the weight that he found himself allowing the romantics to carry for him, Cavell seems to have further found that in the necessary poetry of his philosophy—in the *making* of it happen, in the bearing or carrying of it express—he could do no other or better for the human and where it finds itself than the dynamically circulating, complexly intimate and encompassing thing of wind and atmosphere and breath.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, I quote from the 1805 version of *The Prelude*, as given in the Norton edition, edited by Jonathan Wordsworth et al.
2. "The wood-cock snaring episode [is] a 'dry run' for the boat-stealing episode" (Wilner 38).
3. On the concept of "secular mysteries" see Duffy xiv–xvi.

WORKS CITED

Bloom, Harold ed. *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*. New York: Norton, 1970. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. Print.

———. *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Drama of the Unknown Woman*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996. Print.

———. *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*. Chicago: U of Press, 1988. Print.

———. *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969. Print.

———. *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida*. Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995. Print.

———. *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2005. Print.

———. *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1994. Print.
———. *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures After Emerson After Wittgenstein*. Albuquerque, NM: Living Batch Press, 1989. Print.
———. *The Senses of Walden*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981. Print.
———. *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Enlarged Edition). Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979. Print.
Duffy, Edward. *Secular Mysteries: Stanley Cavell and English Romanticism*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. Print.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Fate." *The Conduct of Life. Essays and Lectures*. Ed. Joel Porte. New York: The Library of America, 1983. 942–68. Print.
Hartmann, Geoffrey. *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1964. Print.
Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Ed. R. A. Foakes. *The Arden Shakespeare*. London: Bloomsbury, 1997. Print.
Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. 1854. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Walden, The Maine Woods, Cape Cod*. Ed. Robert F. Sayre. New York: The Library of America, 1985. 321–587. Print.
Wilner, Joshua. *Feeding on Infinity: Readings in the Romantic Rhetoric of Internalization*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. Print.
Wordsworth, William. Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802). *The Major Works*. Ed. Stephen Gill. 1984. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 595–615. Print.
———. "*The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*. Eds. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, Stephen Gill. New York: Norton, 1979. Print.

List of Contributors

Yves Abrioux is Professor of English Literature and director of the PhD program (*école doctorale*) in the humanities at the Université Paris 8: Vincennes–Saint-Denis. His research interests are in art, literature, and landscape in relation to philosophy, theory, science, and technology. He is former president of the Society for Literature, Science and the Arts–Europe. He has exhibited collaborative artworks on gardens and landscaping and curated exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic.

Christoph Bode is Chair of Modern English Literature at LMU Munich and was Visiting Professor at the University of California Los Angeles in 1997 and at Berkeley in 2012. He has published 24 books and some 80 articles. Former president of the German Society for English Romanticism, co-editor of three book series, Fellow of LMU's Centre for Advanced Studies and of the *Academia Europaea*, Bode is also the recipient of various research grants, among them two fellowships from Oxford and an Advanced Investigator Grant from the ERC. He was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2013.

Thomas Constantinesco is Associate Professor at the Université Paris Diderot and a junior fellow of the Institut Universitaire de France (IUF). His research focuses on the relations between nineteenth-century American literature and philosophy and he is the author of *Ralph Waldo Emerson: L'Amérique à l'essai* (2012). He has written several articles and book chapters on Emerson, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, and Henry James (*The New England Quarterly*, *ESQ*, *Revue française d'études américaines*, *Transatlantica*). He has also taken part in the French translation and edition of *Melville, derniers poèmes* (2010) and co-edited a collection of essays entitled *Littérature et politique en Nouvelle-Angleterre* (2011).

Eric Dayre is Professor of Comparative Literature at the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon. He is the author of *Les Proses du temps, De Quincey lecteur de Kant (*2002), *L'Absolu Comparé* (2009), and *Une Histoire dissemblable* (2010). He has translated works by Coleridge, Lamb, and De Quincey into French. His fields of research are Translation Studies,

Poetry and Poetics, especially the relations of poetry and philosophy from the late eighteenth century onwards in Northern Europe. He is the founder and acting director of the Center for Comparative Research on the Creative Arts, at the ENS Lyon (http://cercc.ens-lyon.fr).

Edward T. Duffy is Associate Professor of English at Marquette University. His most recent works are *Secular Mysteries: Stanley Cavell and English Romanticism* (2013) and *The Constitution of Shelley's Poetry: The Argument of Language in* Prometheus Unbound (2009).

Susan L. Dunston is Professor of English at New Mexico Tech where she teaches philosophy, American literature, and writing. She is president of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society (2014–2015). Since the publication of her book *The Romance of Desire: Emerson's Commitment to Incompletion* (1997), she has published articles and presented conference papers on Emerson in connection to feminism, Asian philosophy and spirituality, environmentalism, and pedagogy. She has also published articles on American literature and culture, science in the work of the Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko, and women's issues in science and engineering disciplines.

Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay is Professor of Nineteenth-century Literature at the Université Paris Est Créteil (UPEC) and has published widely on Victorian writers (Dickens, Wilkie Collins, J. S. Le Fanu, H. G. Wells, and A. Conan Doyle in particular), highlighting the cross-fertilization between genres, but also closely focusing on questions of style, poetics and narrative personae. She wrote *Le Fantastique anglo-saxon* (1998), translated George MacDonald's *Lilith* (1895) into French in 2007, and published various papers on Thomas De Quincey, and a monograph on his autobiographical works entitled *L'Autobiographie de Thomas de Quincey. Une Anatomie de la douleur* (2010).

Angela Esterhammer is Principal of Victoria College and Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. Her publications include *Creating States: Studies in the Performative Language of John Milton and William Blake* (1994), *The Romantic Performative: Language and Action in British and German Romanticism* (2000), *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750–1850* (2008), and the edited volumes *Romantic Poetry* (2002) and *Spheres of Action: Speech and Performance in Romantic Culture* (2009). Her current research examines interrelations among improvisational performance, print culture, periodicals, and fiction in the early nineteeth century.

Joel Faflak is Professor of English and Theory at Western University, where he is Director of the School for Advanced Studies in the Arts and Humanities and a current Faculty Scholar. He is author of *Romantic Psychoanalysis* (2008); co-author of *Revelation and Knowledge* (2011); editor of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (2009);

and editor or co-editor of eight volumes, including *The Romanticism Handbook* (2011), *The Handbook to Romanticism Studies* (2012), *The Public Intellectual and the Culture of Hope* (2013), and *Romanticism and the Emotions* (2014). He is North American Editor (Romanticism) for *Literature Compass*.

Danielle Follett is Associate Professor of English at the University of Franche-Comté in Besançon, France. She specializes in nineteenth-century American and British literature, comparative literature and the history of ideas. She obtained a PhD from the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University in Comparative Literature and the History of Ideas in 2007, and a second doctorate in American literature from the University of Paris 8 in 2010. She is the co-editor of *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2011) and the author of numerous articles.

Paul Grimstad's first book, *Experience and Experimental Writing: Literary Pragmatism from Emerson to the Jameses*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2013. His essays on literature and philosophy have appeared most recently in *American Impersonal: Essays with Sharon Cameron* (2014) and *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies: Consequences of Skepticism* (2011), as well as in *American Literary History, Poetics Today*, *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, *The Henry James Review*, and many other journals. He teaches at Yale University.

Pascale Guibert is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English Studies at the Université de Caen Basse-Normandie. Her field of interest lies in questioning the relation between reflection and the representation of landscape in poetry, first and foremost, from Wordsworth to contemporary migrant poets, but also in the visual arts. She is the editor of *Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries* (2011), and, with René Gallet, of *Le Sujet romantique et le monde: la voie anglaise* (2009), as well as the author of a number of articles on Wordsworth, Seamus Heaney, and Eamonn Wall.

Simon Jarvis is the Gorley Putt Professor of Poetry and Poetics in the Faculty of English at the University of Cambridge. Among his publications are *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (2007) and many essays on philosophical aesthetics and the poetics of verse.

Sophie Laniel-Musitelli is Associate Professor at the Université de Lille. Her research focuses on the interactions between literature, science and philosophy in the Romantic era. She is the author of *"The Harmony of Truth": Sciences et poésie dans l'œuvre de P. B. Shelley* (2012), and of several articles and book chapters on the relationship between scientific discourse and literary writing in the works Percy B. Shelley, William Blake, Erasmus Darwin, and Thomas De Quincey. She has edited *Sciences et poésie de Wordsworth à Hopkins* (Etudes Anglaises 2011) and co-authored *Muses et ptérodactyles: La poésie de la science de Chénier à Rimbaud* (Seuil 2013).

Arkady Plotnitsky is Professor of English and director of the Theory and Cultural Studies Program at Purdue University. He has published extensively on British and European Romanticism, continental philosophy, the philosophy of mathematics and science, and the relationships among literature, philosophy, and science. His most recent books are *Epistemology and Probability: Bohr, Heisenberg, Schrödinger and the Nature of Quantum-Theoretical Thinking* (2009) and *Niels Bohr and Complementarity* (2012).

Laura Quinney teaches in the English Department at Brandeis University. Her recent work on Romanticism includes: *William Blake on Self and Soul* (Harvard UP, 2010), "William Blake and His Contemporaries" (*The Blackwell Companion to British Literature*, 2014), and "Romanticism, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism" (*Blackwell's Companion to British Romanticism*, 2011).

Mark Sandy is a Senior Lecturer in English Studies at Durham University. He has published studies of *Poetics of Self and Form in Keats and Shelley* (2005) and *Romanticism, Memory, and Mourning* (2013). He has edited *Romantic Presences in the Twentieth Century* (2012). He has co-edited collections on *Romantic Echoes in the Victorian Era* (2008) and *Venice and the Cultural Imagination* (2012). He is currently finalizing a co-edited volume on Decadent Romanticism and researching a monograph on the influence of British Romanticism on twentieth-century American literature.

Index

absolute 5–6, 8, 22–4, 28–32, 46
acts of poetry 90–1
Adorno, Theodor 100
aesthetic, the 25–6, 133–7, 143n4
Agnew, Jean-Christophe 149, 151
Ahnung 33
alienation 186, 204
allegory 29–32, 51–8
Andrews, Malcolm 157
angst 192n4, 196, 204
animism 245–52
anonymity 173, 176
Anschauung 28
anxiety 53, 181, 185–7, 204
Apollonian 35, 62, 68–9
Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* 49; *Poetics* 41, 47, 56
artistic configuration 124–5
associationism 120, 122
Athenaeum 19–21, 42
Austen, Jane 170–1; *Mansfield Park* 172; *Persuasion* 169, 171–7; *Pride and Prejudice* 172; *Sense and Sensibility* 172
autobiography 194–205
automata 148
auto-referentiality 30, 32–3

Badiou, Alain 74, 120; *Briefings on Existence* 92; *Handbook of Inaesthetics* 117; *Pocket Pantheon: Figures of Postwar Philosophy* 37
Barrell, John 131–3, 140
Baudelaire,Charles 60, 98–9
Bayes, Thomas 78
Bayesian approach 78
begriff 239
Behler, Ernst 5
Being 74–91, 84, 88
Beiser, Fredrick 31
belief 57
Benjamin, Walter 54; *Origin of German Tragic Drama* 51
Bentham, Jeremy: *Fragment of Government* 168
Berkeley, George 215–6
Bhagavad Gita 222, 224
Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 148, 153–4, 157
Blake, William 190–2; *The Book of Urizen* 187–8; *The Four Zoas* 179, 185–6; *Jerusalem* 189; *Milton* 188–90; *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 186
Blanchot, Maurice 23, 76
Bloom, Harold 10, 132, 138, 141, 249
Bourdieu, Pierre 160
Bowie, Andrew 5
Brentano, Clemens 21
Buddhism 223
Bürger, Gottfried August 20
Burke, Edmund: *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* 154–5
Byron, George, Lord 134–5

camelion poet 152–3
Campanella, Tommaso 154–5
causality 76–79
Cavell, Stanley 228, 233–5, 241; *The Claim of Reason* 237–8, 245; *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* 243; *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* 245–6; *The Senses of Walden* 246
Chai, Leon 5
chance 77–8, 82
Cixous, Hélène 232

Clare, John 131–42; "Birds Nests" 141; "Emmonsails Heath in Winter" 141; *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* 132; "Poets love nature ..." 138; "The Lane" 140–2
Clark, David 5, 23, 34
Clark, Lorraine 11
cogito 183
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 51–58, 159, 209–19; *Aids to Reflection* 212, 213; *Biographia Literaria* 45, 47–9; "Dejection, an Ode" 211; *The Friend* 212–3; *Lay Sermons* 59; *Opus Maximum* 214; "Religious Musings" 210, 212; *Statesman's Manual* 40, 50–2, 213; "The Eolian Harp" 210–1; "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" 246
composition, plane of 137, 142
conditions. *See* grammatical criteria; possibilities of phenomena
consciousness 149, 249
creativity 222–32
criteria 235–8
critical theory 4, 7, 21
criticism 25, 30–1, 33, 41–2; 54–5
Cudworth, Ralph 211
Curran, Stuart 62, 158

darstellung 28, 170
Darwin, Charles 81
Dayre, Eric 2
death 196–7
deconstruction 5, 8, 41, 51–2
de Finetti, Bruno 78
deism 210
Deleuze, Gilles 1, 79, 84–5, 137; *Difference and Repetition / Différence et Répétition* 137; *The Logic of Sense / Logique du sens* 137; *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* 92
Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 92; *A Thousand Plateaus / Mille Plateaux* 137; *What is Philosophy / Qu'est-ce que la philosphie ?* 137, 142
de Man, Paul 4–5, 7–9, 34, 41, 51–4, 56–7, 60, 69, 71n1, 72n15, 81–2, 86, 89, 97, 102, 109–10
De Quincey, Thomas 147, 194–205; *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* 195–6, 198–9, 202; *Suspiria de Profundia* 194–6, 201, 204
Derrida, Jacques 5, 41, 51–2, 75, 81, 83, 169; *Dissemination* 75, 91n4; *Of Grammatology* 88; *On the Name* 86; *Specters of Marx* 61; *Writing and Difference* 72
Descartes, René 183, 203, 204, 243; *Meditations* 233
desire 171–7, 184–6
despair 11, 179–92
de Staël, Madame 20
determinism 76–7
dialetics 54, 57, 133
dialogism 205
Dickinson, Emily 1
Dionysian 62, 68–9
disequilibrium 181
disidealization 101, 111
disillusionment 101–2
displacement 125–6
dissatisfaction 173, 177
doppelgänger 148, 155
dramatization 137
Drummond, William 91–2
dualism 12, 209–19
Duncan, Ian 154
duplicate 159

effect. *See* causality
efficacity 6, 76
ego 180, 186–91
Eldridge, Richard 13
Emerson, Ralph Waldo 209, 215–9, 222–32; "Brahma" 224; "Character" 231; "Circles" 223–4, 231; "Each and All" 225; *Early Lectures* 214; "Experience" 225, 227, 230, 231, 234, 239; "Fate" 224; *Letters* 12, 214–5; *Nature* 215–6, 222, 225; "Nature" 218; "Nominalist and Realist" 228–9; "Self-Reliance" 229, 231, 233–4, 240; "The American Scholar" 230; "The Method of Nature" 215; "The Poet" 218, 230
emotion 44–5, 174–5
empiricism 88, 179, 186, 187
Enlightenment 40, 123–5, 148–54, 167–8
environment-poem,142
epic 2, 68–9
epistemology 76–9, 84–5, 224–6
Erfahrung 233
eternity 181–92
ethos 49
experience 51, 203, 233, 235–8

expression 140–2, 235–7, 251–2
exteriority 80, 84

faith 45–6, 55, 181, 187, 211
feeling 166–77; and meter 122–3
feminism 226
Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 21, 58
Fletcher, Angus 141–2
Foucault, Michael 83, 140
fragment 30, 42, 226
Freud, Sigmund 169, 172
Frühromantik 19–36

generic hybridity 11, 194, 196
genius, concept of 12, 49, 227
ghostly 60–71
gnosticism 189
Godwin, William 40, 45; *Caleb Williams* 43; *Enquiry on Political Justice* 43, 44, 46–7; *Of History and Romance* 42–3, 47
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 20, 30, 168, 215, 222
Goodman, Russell 5
grammar 236–8
grammatical criteria 239–41
Gravil, Richard 5, 219
Greenham, David 5, 216, 219
grief 62–9
Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm 21
guilt 62, 70, 204, 248–50

habit 111
habitus 160
Hamilton, Paul 4, 5, 102
happiness 11, 166–77
Harlow, George Henry 161
Hartley, David 120
Hartman, Geoffrey 248
haunting 60–71
Hazlitt, William: *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* 151–2
Hedge, Frederick 215, 216
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 79–80, 85, 169
Heidegger, Martin 53, 74, 84, 88, 249, 252
hierarchy 132–4, 210
Hinduism 223–4
history 34; and poetry 40–58
Hobbes, Thomas: *Leviathan* 149
Hoffmann, E. T. A. 21
Hogg, James 158; *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* 154–5
Hölderlin, Johann Christian Friedrich 20, 21, 77, 83
Hülsen, August Ludwig 36
Hume, David 76–9; *Treatise of Human Nature* 150–3
humour 200, 202
Hunt, Leigh 153, 159
Husserl, Edmund 85
hyperbolic doubt 233
hypothesis 76–91, 216

idealism 216–8
ideas 40, 136–7; regulative 26–27, 40
identity 10, 147–63
imagination 40, 42, 47, 50, 52, 57, 58, 86–7, 150–3, 163, 166, 189–92, 212, 216, 223, 230, 248
imitation 158–9
immanence 209–19
immutable One 74
impersonation 148–63
improvisation 226–7, 230–1
indirect communication 200
individual 170–1, 225
infinity 193
inner, the 57, 189, 250
intellectual tranquillity 44–5
ironic relief 204
irony 31–2

Jakobson, Roman 137, 139
Jamblichus 218
James, Henry 20
Jefferson, Thomas 34
Jena 21, 23, 33–4, 42
Jervis, John 163

Kant, Immanuel 25–7, 77, 80, 233; *The Critique of Pure Reason* 79
Keach, William 103
Keats, John 35, 61, 77, 83, 87, 128n15, 135, 137, 143n7, 152–3, 163, 166, 167
Khan, Inanyat 226
Kierkegaard, Søren 179, 180–5, 190–2, 194–205; *The Concept of Anxiety* 195; *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 183; *Either-Or* 196; *Fear and Trembling* 195–8, 204; *Philosophical Fragments* 196; *Repetition* 195–7, 199–200, 202–3; *The Sickness Unto Death* 180, 183
Klein, Anne Carolyn 226–7

Kleist, Heinrich von 77, 81, 83
Klingemann, Ernst August Friedrich 21
knowledge 225–6, 230, 249–50, 252
Kompridis, Nikolas 4

Lacan, Jacques 81, 134
Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe: & Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute* 4, 6, 8, 19–37, 42, 223
landscape 125–7, 133, 134–5
language 5, 13, 30, 33, 41, 45–58, 61–71, 123–4, 139, 142, 235–8, 249–50
Laplace, Pierre-Simon de 77
Latour, Bruno 3–4
Le Blanc, Charles 194, 196, 198, 199
Lecler, Eric 5, 6
life 9, 50, 68, 81–82, 86–91, 99–112, 188–9, 199–200, 211–6, 225–7, 249–52
Lippitt, John 196, 200, 201
literary absolute 5, 22–24, 29, 31–2. See Laboue-Labarthe, Philippe
literary theory of *Frühromantik* 19–36
Locke, John 148, 168; *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 149
Lockhart, John Gibson 153
logos 122, 200, 212

madness 80, 139, 142, 242
Mallarmé, Stéphane 126
Marx, Karl 35, 170
master signifier 134–41
materialism 111
mathematics 122
Mathews, Charles 148, 157–63
Matthiessen F. O. 12
Mayo, Robert 127n2
McGann, Jerome 6, 125
melancholy 197
memory 8, 60, 64, 110, 194, 247, 250
metaphysics 5, 37n14, 75, 91n3, 103, 132, 137, 224–5
meter 2, 49, 53, 55, 109–10, 120–4, 230; and feelings 122–3
Milton, John: *Paradise Lost* 68, 69, 87
mimesis 7, 30, 32, 135
mimicry 158–9
mind 83–88; as a theatre 150
minor 3, 10, 131, 138–41
mirror effects 202
misrelation 181
modernity 34
monism 12, 209–12, 219, 223–4
mood 166, 168, 173, 176, 234, 240, 242, 243
moral 44–5, 48, 149–55, 172–3, 190, 209–16, 225, 250–1
More, Henry 215
mourning 8, 62, 68, 196
multiple, the 74–5, 87
multiple-Being 74
mystery 126–7

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *See* Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe
nature 12, 210–9, 249; and mind 83–88
necessity 43–4, 46
negative capability (Keats) 87
Neoplatonism 210–1, 214–5
nepenthe 99, 109
New Monthly Magazine 147–8
Nietzsche, Friedrich 60–1, 89, 169; *The Birth of Tragedy* 170
nihilism 111
non-knowledge 79–80
Novalis 30, 32
novel 42–4
numbers 122

objectivity 179
ontology 74–80, 84
ordinary, the 61, 235, 245–6, 250, 252
originality 227
Outer, the 187, 190, 250
Outside, the 80

panentheism 219n2
pantheism 213
Parmenides 74
passionate reason 196
pathos 200
Patmore, P. G. 158–60
Paul, Jean 21
peasant poet 10, 131–43
performance 149–50, 157–163
personae 199–201
personal identity. *See* identity
personhood 98–9
perversity 241–3
Pfau, Thomas 20, 22, 24, 166
phantom proxy 51–2
phenomena 134
philosophical autobiography 194–205

philosophical poem 2, 9, 118–20
philosophy 2, 5, 35; breach with poetry 118–21; controlling romanticism 25–29, 33; its relationship with poetry 117–18; in the poem 120–1; and poetry 46–50
Plato 41, 74, 117, 122, 219
Platonism 74–6, 87
Plotinus 41, 215
Poe, Edgar Allan: "The Imp of the Perverse" 241–3
poem, philosophy in 120–1
poesy 29–31
poetic landscapes 9–10, 117–27
poetics 2–3, 7, 8; politics of 123–4
poetic truth 41
poetry 2–3; breach with philosophy 118–21; continuity between the ideal and reality 45; definition 40, 44; and history 40–58; its relationship with philosophy 117–8; and philosophy 46–50; popularity in England 117–8; truth of 41
poiesis 46–8, 53, 54, 56
politics 69–70; of poetics 123–4
politics of literature 6, 10
Porée, Marc 122, 125
possibilities of phenomena 249
Post-Romanticism 8, 61, 134
power 7, 21, 25, 28, 33, 41, 57, 84–6, 92n8, 97, 107, 110, 117, 146, 167–9, 196, 213, 226, 247–8, 251–2
powerlessness 126–7
private language argument 237
probability 78, 80, 82
Proclus 215, 218
prose 43–4
prosody 103, 109
prosopopoeia 69
pseudonym 148, 199–201

qualia 235–8
quasi-transcendental thinking 101

Rajan, Tilottama 4–5, 23, 34
Rancière, Jacques 6, 133–6
randomness 77–8, 81–2
reason 26, 168
Redfield, Marc 23, 60
reflexiveness 3–6, 24, 30–4, 134, 138, 245
regulative ideas 26–7, 40
relations 80
rengaine (tune) 137
representation 25–29
responsibility 154, 184, 194, 200, 204, 231
ressentiment 169, 177
rhyme 2, 45, 48, 110, 138
rhythm 50–7
Richir, Marc 134
ritournelle (ditty) 131, 137
Roe, Nicholas 40
romance 42–3; haunted 66–71
romantic criticism 149, 153
Romantic Hypothesis 76–86, 88–9
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 102, 104–5, 163
Rozenberg, Paul 123, 128n13
Russett, Margaret 149

Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph 20; *Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism* 20; "Heinz Widerporst's Epicurea Confession of Faith" 20; *Philosophy of Art* 20, 33–4
Schiller, Friedrich 20, 21, 168
Schlegel, August Wilhelm 20
Schlegel, Caroline 20, 36n5
Schlegel, Dorothea 20, 36n5
Schlegel, Friedrich 20, 26, 29–32, 35, 43; "Athenaeum" 20, 42; *Athenaeum Fragments* 20; *Critical Fragments* 20; *Dialogue on Poetry* 20; *Ideas, On Philosophy* 20; *Lyceum* 20, 31; "On the Essence of Criticism" 20
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 20, 36n5
Schopenhauer, Arthur: *Parerga and Paralipomena* 170; *The World as Will and Representation* 169–70
secret 85–6, 88, 200–1
self-annihilation 180, 188–90
self-bewilderment 179, 190
self-consciousness 149, 235
self-conscious text 23
self-division 4, 181
self-reflexivity 23–4, 30–2
sensation 50, 121, 131, 136–42
sensible, the 10, 124, 134–7
Seyhan, Azade 30, 37n18
Shakespeare, William 35, 153
Shelley, Percy Bysshe 1, 9, 167; *Adonais* 88, 91; *Alastor* 88; *A Defense of Poetry* 76, 90, 91; *Julian and Maddalo* 88–9; "Mont Blanc" 83–9;

"Ode to Liberty" 7; "Ode to the West Wind" 107–10; *Prometheus Unbound* 87, 88, 91; "The Triumph of Life" 81–2, 88, 91, 97–112
shifting identity. *See* identity
singularity 125–6
skepticism 13, 76–7, 79, 87, 233–43, 245–6
Smith, Adam 167; *Theory of Moral Sentiments* 150–1, 155
Smith, Charlotte 83
Socrates 74
solipsism 188, 203, 234
sonnet 60, 67, 138–42
spectral 6, 8, 60–71, 101
speech, allegorical 29–32
spenserian 62, 68, 70
Spinoza, Baruch 219n4
Spital 66
St. Augustine 190
Stevens, Wallace 61
Stewart, Dugald: *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* 154
Stoicism 181
Stonehenge 64, 66
stuttering, poetics of 131, 137–9, 142
style 10–1, 142, 180, 235, 240–1
subject 118–22, 159–60, 169–70, 179–92
subjectivity 11–2, 179–80, 183–92
suffrage 234, 243
Sufi poetry 222–3
superstition 63–6, 70–1, 245, 252
suspension 55
suspension of belief 45–6
Swedenborg, Emanuel 215, 218
Swift, Simon 4
symbol 51–8
sympathy 150–1
syntax 2, 104, 133, 140–2

Taylor, Charles 149; *Sources of the Self* 163
terza rima 107, 110
theatre 149–50, 157, 162–3
theatre of the mind 150
theatricalized self 148–9, 160–3
theoretical romanticism 23–4
Thoreau, Henry David 12, 13, 228, 230, 253
Tieck, Ludwig 21, 36n5
time 42, 54–5
time-cadence 54
time-meaning 54–5
tragic affirmation 88–91
transcendence 223–4
translucence 52–3
transvaluation 125–6
Transzendentalpoesie 30
trauma 196–7
Trinitarianism 212, 214
truth 124–7; poetic 41

uncanny 61
understanding 23, 26, 40–3, 213–15, 235–6
unhappiness 172–3
unitarianism 210–11
unity of form and content 51–2
unthinkable, the: and its effects 75–83; in "Mont Blanc" 83–8

Vernunft 26
Vernunftbegriffe 27
verse 55, 56–8
verse-philosophy 2, 8, 56–8
verse-thinking 2, 9, 101
versification 48–49, 53, 56–8, 100–1, 107–10
Verstand 26
vocation 184–5, 190–2
von Arnim, Achim 21

Wackenroder, Heinz 20, 21
Wasserman, Earl 84
will 170, 180–1
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 235–8, 249
wonder 108, 111–2
Wordsworth, William 60–2, 134–5; *Essay upon Epitaphs* 68; *The Excursion* 135; "Guilt and Sorrow" 70; "Immortality Ode" 246; "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey" 13, 121, 173, 241; *Lyrical Ballads* 43, 118–26; preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* 43–5, 107, 118, 125, 223; *The Prelude* (1805), 2, 66, 119–20, 124, 168, 246–8; *The Recluse* 119, 167–8; *Salisbury Plain* 62–71; "The Thorn" 125–6
world, as global concept 249–50